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THE CUSTODIAN

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CHAPTER I.

I WAS born in the lodge that stands just behind the great iron gates that guard the entrance to Pendleton Castle.

How often I can remember my mother springing up from her seat and hastening out to fling them open! I, too, would run to the door and shyly watch the grand folk as they rode or drove up the avenue, often receiving a kindly nod as they passed.

They were hardly mortal in my eyes, these grand castle folk. I can remember even now my surprise when the old duke died.

After his death, the great house was tenanted for most of the year by the duchess. She was a tall, almost gigantic woman, with a quick, abrupt manner which was terrifying to people with weak nerves.

The duchess' younger son, Oswald, had died before his father, and her only surviving son, the new duke, was unmarried. Nor did he seem in any haste to entangle himself in matrimonial nets. His visits to the castle were not frequent, though I can remember him—a thin, pale-faced, reserved man, whose sphere was the House of Lords, where he occupied appreciable time every session "explaining his position," a matter seemingly of not absorbing in-

terest to the political leaders on either side of the house. Besides the duke, there were three girls.

Sometimes, but very seldom, and only when the door was shut and the lamp was lit, and we were cozily seated by the fire, my mother would refer to their dead brother Oswald. A far-away look would come into her eyes, and her hands would clasp and unclasp, as she told me how good he was, and how handsome.

My mother was a little, fragile woman, with deep, large, dark eyes, and the traces of a former beauty on her tired face, over which I never saw spread the flush of anger or of joy. Of her own life's history she never spoke to me; but my firm friend, the housekeeper, told me her uneventful story, so far as she knew it. Once, my mother had been the duchess' lady's maid, and her father had been the lodge keeper. Then my mother left the duchess to take another situation in London, and soon after she married. After a few months of married life her husband died, and she came home to her father. And then I was born. Soon after her father also died, and she took his place as lodge keeper.

One summer day, when I was nearing the completion of my ninth year, I was playing under the shadow of the elm that stood nearest to our cottage. Suddenly I relinquished my game and fled into the house.

"She's coming, mother!" I shouted. "She" could mean but one woman.

My mother whipped off her apron and unrolled her sleeves.

"Go you and wash your face and hands," she commanded, and I slid away to obey her.

While I splashed at the sink, the duchess' massive form darkened the window, and the next moment I heard her voice in talk with my mother. After an interval I crept in at the door and stood looking at the duchess, who ignored me completely. As she turned to go, however, she stopped for a moment to pat my head—a heavy pat, more like a cuff, it seemed to me.

"He's getting a big boy," she observed. "I suppose he goes to school?"

"Oh, yes, your grace," answered my mother.

"And gets on well?"

My mother hesitated. "Yes, your grace," she replied, fibbing, I fear, for my sake.

"Have you thought to what trade you will put him?" asked the duchess.

My mother did not answer. I glanced at her with surprise, for I knew the duchess liked an immediate reply to her slightest question. But my mother continued silent, and then I saw her commence to clasp and unclasp her hands, a common trick of hers when agitated. The duchess was a woman of quick perceptions. She raised her glass to her eyes.

"What, what?" she asked, in her peremptory manner.

"I—I don't want him to be put to any trade," my mother replied at last.

"What then?" asked the duchess.

"I want him to be a——"

"Well, speak out. Is the woman dumb-struck? You want him to be a——"

"A gentleman!" whispered my mother, very dark about the eyes.

The duchess was taken aback. "A gentleman!" she echoed. "And what do you mean by that? A clerk in an office? Tut, tut, much better make him a carpenter."

My mother shook her head. "I want him to be a gentleman like his father."

"Was his father a gentleman?" queried the duchess.

"Yes, oh yes."

"What was he?" asked the duchess.

"He was a lieutenant in the Seventh Lancers."

The duchess started. "I never knew that before," she said. "The Seventh Lancers! That was my son's regiment." She sat down and draped her voluminous skirts around her.

"Your husband left you quite unprovided for, did he not?" she asked.

"He died so unexpectedly. He intended to, but—but there was no time."

"But didn't you apply to his relations?"

My mother shook her head.

"Come, come, what folly is this?" exclaimed the duchess. "Tell me all about it at once. No mystery, please. Who was this husband of yours?"

My mother opened her mouth to speak, and shut it again without uttering a word.

"Did your husband's relatives approve of his marriage?" asked the duchess, sharply.

My mother's agitation was painful to witness. She tried to speak, but the words would not come.

"No," she whispered at length.

The duchess looked at her steadily. The clock seemed to commence ticking.

"Was there a marriage to approve of?" she asked, abruptly.

My mother began to cry. A frozen look came over the duchess' face. She sat still for several moments, regarding my mother with stony eyes, and then she rose and swept towards the door.

"I am shocked," she said. "I never guessed this, or——" She stopped suddenly, for I think the agony on my mother's face touched her. She came slowly back to her former seat.

"Why did you tell me this?" she asked, not unkindly.

"My boy!" sobbed my mother.

"Well, well!" said the duchess. "And the man—you say he is dead?"

"He was so good, so kind. He loved me so," sobbed my mother. "And then he died! So I came home. I never told anyone."

"That was wrong," said the duchess. "Possibly his relations would have deemed it their duty to make some provision for the child."

My mother raised her tear-stained face.

"Do you think so?" she asked, eagerly.

"Of course, I can't say," replied the duchess. "It would have been their duty to do so. Let me have his name, and I will make some inquiries. Have you any letters or anything else which will corroborate your story?"

With a look of something like fear, my mother went slowly to the chest of drawers that stood in a corner of the room and unlocked one of the upper drawers. She drew forth a packet of letters tied with blue ribbon and brought it to the duchess.

"Am I to look at these? I am not sure I care to."

"Yes, yes," implored my mother, still with the frightened look in her eyes.

So the duchess unfastened the packet, took the top letter into her hands, and unfolded it. The others lay on her lap. When her glance fell on the handwriting, she sprang to her feet with a cry, and the letters were scattered on the red-brick floor. My mother retreated a step or two, and put up her hands as if to ward off a blow.

"You lie!" cried the duchess, though my mother had not spoken a word.

"It's the truth," wept my mother, hiding her face in her apron.

"How dare you——" thundered the duchess. She stopped short suddenly, and sitting down began to read the letter which she still held in her hand.

"I don't believe it!" she cried, as she turned the page. "Nothing will induce me to believe it." But her face had aged suddenly.

"No one knew," sobbed my mother; "not even father."

"You went up to London to take a situation," said the duchess, scornfully.

"There was no situation."

"N—no, your grace."

"You went to——" she gulped something down—"to my son, Oswald?"

"Yes."

"How long did you live with him?"

My mother sobbed with renewed violence.

"Only a few months."

"And then?"

"He died."

Both women were silent, and I imagine a slight feeling of pity stirred in the duchess' heart.

"How could he?" she murmured.

"How could you?" she added, with much greater sternness.

"I loved him," said my mother, almost defiantly.

The duchess rose hastily. "The boy!" she said, quickly. "Where is the boy?"

My mother looked around dazedly, for I had retired into the adjoining room. She came unsteadily to me. I could understand little of what I had heard, and my brain was in a whirl.

"Come, dearie," my mother said. "She wants you."

"What is the matter?" I asked. "Is she angry?"

"Be a good boy," my mother whispered in my ear as she arranged my hair with deft fingers. "And you must love her very much."

My jaw dropped. Fancy loving the duchess!

We went into the room together. To my astonishment, the great lady was kneeling on the floor, picking up the scattered letters. My mother ran to her with a cry.

"There, there," said the duchess, getting up with more agility than I could have imagined possible. "Take 'em and put 'em away. Best burn them, I should say."

My mother uttered a little inarticulate cry of protest, and the duchess regarded her more sympathetically.

"We're silly creatures, we women," she said, softly. "And this is Oswald's son? God bless us!" She drew me towards her, and putting her hands on either side of my face, looked long and steadily into my eyes.

"Tut, tut," she said, and pushed me away a little roughly. "What do you call him?"

"Oswald," replied my mother, pre-

pared, as I could see, to re-start whimpering.

"He's like his father," the duchess observed, thoughtfully. "I can't understand why I never saw the likeness before. His eyes——"

"When he is grown up," said my mother, proudly, "he will be the image of his father."

"Stuff and nonsense," snapped the duchess. But she stood and looked at me with a puzzled expression. "Others may guess," she said, at length. "He'd better go away. I can't have any scandal."

"Then I'll go away with him," cried my mother, tearfully.

"Absurd!" said the duchess. "He'll go to school."

"A gentleman's school?" asked my mother eagerly, with a sudden light in her eyes.

The duchess nodded. "Yes. Why not?"

My mother clasped her hands. "Oh, how I thank your grace!"

The duchess made for the door. "It's a miserable business," she said, "but I suppose I must make the best of it. But it's a blow to me, a very great blow."

She disappeared. I remember that during the next hour I grew weary of my mother's kisses.

CHAPTER II.

Within a few weeks of my mother's interview with the duchess I was sent to a school in the environs of Paris. My poor mother died within six months of my leaving her.

After I had been at this school for a little over three years, I was suddenly removed to another school at Heidelberg, and here I was destined to remain nearly six years. During these nine years I never once visited England, nor did I have a visit from the duchess or from anyone representing her.

Just about the time I had attained my eighteenth year I received a letter from the duchess. It was a curt letter, beginning "Dear Oswald," and concluding "Yours truly." She asked me in a

single sentence if I had formed any views as to my future career. In a post-script she added, "Would you like to go to Oxford?"

I remember my answer, or rather my answers, for I wrote many before I could decide on one. The letter I finally dispatched was as brief as the one I had received, and couched in very nearly the same phraseology. I wrote:

"MADAME: I have formed no views as to my future career."

"Yours truly,

"OSWALD CHAPMAN.

"P. S.—I should like to go to Oxford."

Three months passed without anything further happening. One day, at the end of this period, the head-master sent for me and told me I was to return to England at once.

"Where am I to go?" I asked with curiosity.

He referred to a letter on his desk.

"Your name at the great Oxford University has been entered," he replied in English, which he spoke without fluency.

"Do I go straight there?"

"Ah, no. It is to 192 Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, in London, that you must go."

"Is that where the Duchess of Pendleton lives?"

He shook his head. "There resides her man of business, her solicitor and commissioner for oaths."

I parted from Heidelberg with little regret. Though my time there had been in a sense happy enough, I had outgrown school life. It was with a feeling of relief I started for my native land.

I remember vividly my arrival in London, late in the night. Putting all my belongings into a four-wheel cab, I directed the driver to take me to Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. Of course, I found the solicitor's office dark and desolate. I cannot recall my interview with the caretaker, whom I routed out of bed, without amusement. Her ridiculous nightcap and the policeman who stood and listened, but never spoke, are before me as I write. The woman was indignant at being disturbed, astounded

that I should believe her employer was to be found at that hour on his business premises, and aghast at my helpless suggestion that she should find house room for me. And I, a stranger in a strange city, and entirely ignorant of the world and its ways, felt as if I had been made the victim of some cruel practical joke.

"Where shall I go?" I asked the policeman, distractedly; who shook his head gloomily, but answered never a word.

"I'm catching my death," lamented the caretaker.

"Why don't you go to a hotel?" bawled the cabman from the box of his cab. I had not thought of that.

I plunged back into the cab. "To a hotel!" I cried. As the cab moved off, I put my head out of the window. "It's a beastly shame!" I shouted to the policeman.

The next morning I was again at 192 Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, and saw Mr. Parsons, her grace's solicitor.

"I understand you called here last night," he said, smiling, as we shook hands.

"I thought I had to," I answered.

"My mistake," he said. "I should have explained more fully in my letter. But I thought you would have understood."

"I never saw your letter."

"Well, well." And he put the matter aside with a wave of his hand. "The duchess has entered your name at Oxford. She wishes you to go up as soon as possible."

"Very well," I assented.

"All business matters," he went on, "will pass through my hands. It is her grace's wish that you should not approach her on monetary matters."

I flushed angrily. "I have no desire to approach her grace on any matter whatever."

My tone made him wrinkle his brow.

"I suppose you realize," he said, frigidly, "that you are entirely dependent upon the Duchess of Pendleton's —" He stopped short.

"On her bounty, you were about to say?" I returned with bitterness. "Yes, I know that."

He seemed annoyed with me. "In such circumstances," he remarked, "a little gratitude would not be out of place."

"I am grateful," I replied, defiantly. "No, I am not. Why should I pretend I am? Why does she treat me so coldly? If she looks upon me as an encumbrance, why didn't she leave me where she found me, to worry out my own future as best I could?"

He regarded me with a good deal of severity. "The duchess," he said, "takes an interest in your welfare, and wishes to help you."

"But she doesn't wish to see me," I replied, resentfully.

"Why should she wish to see you?"

"Why, indeed?" I answered.

He rose and stood with his back to the fireplace. "You may take it from me that you are a distant connection of the duchess. I cannot tell you more."

"I know more," I said, importantly. "I know my father was her son, and that he did not marry my mother."

"You know that?" he asked, quickly.

"I overheard a conversation between my mother and the duchess, years ago. As a child I did not fully understand. But, of course, I understand now."

"I hope you have not mentioned this to anyone."

"Of course not. My own knowledge was shame enough. It would not lessen it to tell others."

"Tell no one," he said, kindly enough. "The fault is not yours, but the world does not discriminate."

I was miserably silent for a moment. "You cannot understand," I began again, "how galling it is to have money flung to you from an unseen hand. No, I cannot be grateful."

"You would rather," said Mr. Parsons, "have been left with your mother's people, to have been brought on their level?"

I was silent.

"The duchess," he went on, "promised your mother to give you a gentleman's education. I am sorry you resent her efforts to carry out her promise."

"But I don't!" I cried. "I assure you I am grateful."

"You said a moment ago you were not."

"Neither I am. Oh, I don't know what I mean."

"It would be as well if you were to consider your meaning more carefully before you attempt to express it in words."

"I think I could explain in German," I said, sadly. "But, after all, perhaps you wouldn't understand."

"I should certainly not understand if you explained in German."

"Don't you see," I went on desperately, "that the present position is hardly consistent with my self-respect?"

"No, I don't see that."

"I can't bear," I cried, vehemently, "to be an unwelcome hanger-on of a ducal family. I want to manage for myself. I am ashamed to accept anyone's bounty."

"I see no reason why you should accept it if you don't want to."

"But how otherwise can I live?"

"That, of course, will be a point for your consideration."

"I don't know what I ought to do," I cried.

"I think I understand you," he said, not unkindly. "On the one hand, you have a feeling of pride which makes you desire to decline her grace's aid."

"True."

"On the other hand, you have ambitions. You do not wish to return to that class for which your education has unfitted you."

"That is so."

"It seems to me," he said, judicially, "that you must either pocket your pride—as you have done for nearly nine years—or you must act the part of a hero of romance!"

"And what would you advise?"

"The former course, assuredly. The world has no use for heroes of romance."

I thought over his words. "I wish," I said, "I was either more or less of a hero."

He smiled grimly. "I think you are well enough as you are. To my mind it is enough to be an honest man."

"But why," I asked, running off at

a tangent, "cannot the duchess treat me with a little human kindness? Is she afraid I shall sponge on her?"

"She does not think that," he answered.

"She is rather hard-hearted. Why couldn't she just——?"

He interrupted me a little impatiently. "You cannot expect her grace to receive with effusion the child born of an irregular connection between her son and her servant."

I winced. For the first time my relations with the duchess, from the point of view of the outside world, came home to me. "I suppose not," I replied, with a sudden depression.

"She feels she has a duty towards you, to educate and maintain you till you are able to provide for yourself. She does not deem that it goes further."

"It shall not go further," I declared, resolutely.

"She has instructed me to pay you three hundred pounds per annum for the next five years, and each year afterwards fifty pounds less. In eleven years her aid will entirely cease. By that time she thinks you should be in a position to earn your own living."

"Her offer is very generous," I said. "My only hope is that long before then I shall be in a position to dispense with her help."

"I trust you may."

I rose. "Good-day, Mr. Parsons," I said, "and many thanks for your advice."

CHAPTER III.

I went up to Oxford, and I remained there for the following three years. My career at the university does not require many words. I took a respectable degree, and did not run into debt. The only distinction which I can claim is that in my last year I played for Oxford against Cambridge. I would not mention this if it had not had a bearing on my after life.

It was a few days after the Varsity match at Lord's that I received, inclosed in a note from Mr. Parsons, a letter

from the duchess, asking me to call. It was a brief note, almost curt, beginning "Dear Oswald," and ending "Yours truly," as in her previous communications. I did not reply to it, but at the hour named I presented myself at her town house.

I was faint-hearted when the footman showed me into the immense drawing room, and my nervousness increased each minute I had to wait. When at length the door opened and I saw the duchess' massive frame in the doorway, I pulled myself together resolutely, determining to hide my tremors. She stood with her hand on the knob for a few seconds, regarding me silently. It seemed to me a long time before she spoke.

"Well, Oswald, how are you?" she said. She came slowly towards me, and when close, she held out her hand.

"You are like—so like your father," she said, at length, and I am certain the tears sprang to her eyes. "You are surprised, are you not," she went on, "that I have sent for you?"

"I am rather surprised," I admitted.

She nodded gravely. "It was a foolish thing to do."

"Why?" I asked.

"It may raise expectations in your mind that I cannot fulfill."

I bit my lips. "I expect nothing from your grace. You have been more than sufficiently generous already."

"I have done all that duty required," she answered, in a matter-of-fact tone. "It would have been wiser not to have sent for you."

"Why, then, did you ask me to call?" I said, abruptly.

"Sentiment—pure sentiment," she rapped out.

"I am afraid I don't understand," I said, stiffly.

"What are you to me?" she asked. "Nothing."

"I am content," I said, diving for my hat.

"Sit down," she commanded, and I sat down.

"Bah!" said she, with contempt of herself, or me.

"You have not told me," I said, im-

patiently, for the situation was irksome, "why you have sent for me."

She looked up quickly. "I have sent for you, Oswald, because I loved your father."

She spoke with sudden emotion, and I studied the floor, not knowing what to say.

"Of course, it is sentimentality," she went on, "which makes me think of the dead rather than the living. I have children and grandchildren in abundance, all alive and highly respectable. Yet my son—my wayward son, who died at your age, Oswald, is always in my thoughts."

I continued my study of the parquet-terie, greatly embarrassed.

"I went with some of my grandchildren to a cricket match the other day. Oswald played it, and I like to sit and think I see him still. Last Friday some one hit the ball almost to my feet. An excited young man, all legs and arms, came tearing after it, and for a moment his face was turned towards me. It was my boy, Oswald!"

She stopped suddenly, and wiped her eyes with her handkerchief. "Yes," she continued, "it was Oswald come back, Oswald as I knew him, as your mother knew him."

I felt I ought to murmur something soothing, but I could not think of anything to say. I began to fear something had affected her intellect.

"Of course," she went on with sudden briskness, "I soon understood. I knew, without looking at the card in my hand, that it was Oswald's son whom I had seen. I had not to see your name as a player to guess that."

"My name?" I exclaimed, involuntarily.

"Yes," she said. "You are the image of your father. It may seem absurd that your resemblance to one who has been dead over twenty years should work a change in my mind. It was my intention to do my duty by you, my duty and perhaps a little over. But, Oswald, all that has changed. I had intended we should never meet, but now I want to see you often. I had intended you should fight your own battles,

but now I am willing to fight them with you and for you. And all this"—she spoke with sudden scorn—"because I am a sentimental old woman."

"Really," I began, with hesitation, "I am afraid I don't quite understand—"

"Of course you don't," she made answer. "Nor would any other rational being. But the sum of it is that I am no longer actuated merely by a sense of duty, and it makes all the difference."

"What difference?" I asked, in my confusion, and blushed lest she should think I was thinking of its money value.

"Oswald," she said, in her deep voice, "for your father's sake, I would gladly bear a mother's part."

Her great weight seemed to be resting on my shoulder. I struggled to my feet, half scared. She put one hand on each shoulder and stared into my eyes till I lost countenance. Then she in-folded me in her arms, kissing me on the forehead. I stood like a block, painfully conscious that her cameo brooch was hurting my nose, and longing to escape. While we stood thus, the door of the room opened. The duchess' hearing was perhaps not very acute, for she remained with her arms round my neck. But I, sensible of the open door, twisted my head towards it, to see the astonished face of a servant, and behind him a little, quaint old man, fumbling for his *pince-nez*.

My uneasy movements at length caused her to relinquish her hold, and at the same moment the footman, prompted by the little old gentleman, announced him in a stentorian voice:

"The Count Darnsdorf."

The duchess turned with a start, and her eyes flashed fire at the unfortunate servant.

"Did I not tell you I was engaged?" she began angrily, but recovered herself instantly. "But you did quite right, for I am always at home to the count."

She advanced to meet him, and he came forward with a mincing, artificial gait, and bowed over her hand with all the airs of a French dancing master.

"One word from you," he said, "and I vanish. I fear I have chosen an inconvenient moment."

"On the contrary," said the duchess, "you have chosen a peculiarly fortunate moment, for I am most anxious to introduce you to"—she stopped till the door had closed on the servant—"my grandson."

"Ah, indeed," said he, and shook me warmly by the hand. "I already have the great honor of knowing your reverend father."

I looked surprised, and the duchess frowned.

"You are making a mistake, count," she said, quickly.

"A thousand pardons, but is he not a son of the bishop?"

"No, no." She hesitated a moment, and then turned to me with a twinkle in her eye. "The bishop the count speaks of is my son-in-law. He married my daughter Cecilia."

She turned to the count. "This is Mr. Oswald Chapman. He is the son of my boy Oswald. I do not think you knew Oswald. He died many years ago."

"I did not know you had a married son," said the count. "I thought—"

She made a little gesture of impatience. "I must explain the circumstances to you another time, count." And then, as if she feared I might be hurt by what had passed, she slipped her arm through mine with a protective air. "We were just about to discuss an important matter about Oswald's future. He has just left Oxford, where he greatly distinguished himself. He has spent many years abroad, and can speak German and French like a native."

The count regarded me attentively. "A native of where?" he asked.

"Like two natives," amended the duchess. "One of Germany and the other of France."

"Languages are useful acquisitions," agreed the count. He put his stick and hat on the floor and looked at me musingly.

"It is necessary he should work for his living?" he asked.

"Yes," said the duchess with decision.

"And he has formed no decision as to his future vocation?"

"None," replied the duchess.

He seemed to be turning something over in his mind. "It would be strange, wouldn't it, duchess, if I could make him an offer of employment?"

"It would be very welcome," said the duchess.

"And yet I do not know——"

"What is it you do not know?"

"Perhaps I have spoken too hastily. It is a secretary I require, one who can help me in the delicate matters which have brought me to England. On the other hand, your—your young friend may disdain my modest proposals."

"He will disdain nothing," responded the duchess.

"On the other hand, my assistant requires certain qualities which I have had no means of judging if Mr. Chapman possesses. You and I, duchess, must discuss the matter together."

I took this as a hint and rose. The duchess held out her hand, and I took it. Then, as if by a sudden impulse, she drew me towards her and kissed me again.

"Good-by, my dear boy," she said, and I was touched by the emotion in her voice.

I shook hands with the count, and was making for the door when she spoke.

"Oswald," she said, "I go down to Pendleton Castle on Monday. I should like you to visit me there for a few days."

I thanked her.

"I will write you as to this." She glanced towards the count. "Perhaps the count may be there, and if so——"

"I may find a secretary," said the count, smiling.

CHAPTER IV.

A few days later I received a note from the duchess desiring me to be at Pendleton Castle on the following Thursday, and giving me the hour of the train by which she wished me to arrive. It was a cordial little note, beginning, "My dearest Oswald." I spent many a sleepless night before I penned

a reply. I had every intention of accepting her invitation, but I could not make up my mind how to commence the letter.

However, I wrote the letter of acceptance and posted it, and when the day arrived, I nearly lost my train from indecision as to the class by which to travel.

When the train drew up at the little station of Pendleton, the first figure I saw on the platform was that of the duchess.

"It was kind of you to come to the station," I said, when we were ensconced in the carriage.

"I wanted to see you before we got to the house," she said. "Of course, I have had to explain the facts to the count——"

"I hardly see the necessity."

"My dear Oswald, I really cannot embrace strange young men without a word of explanation. As it has turned out, it was singularly lucky the count appeared at that awkward moment. I feel sure he will accept you as his secretary, provided, of course, you don't betray too obvious signs of lunacy."

"I must try not to reveal my mental defects until the contract is signed," I said, moodily.

"It will be the making of you, Oswald," said the duchess, fondly. "It is a most fortunate opening."

"Who is the count?" I asked.

"The Count Darnsdorf," she said, "is quite a great man on a minor scale. He is the chief minister of the Grand Duke of Saxe-Cassel. When I was young and very foolish, he was young and very wise, and we became fast friends. We have been friends ever since."

"You will never come across a more sagacious man than Count Darnsdorf in all your journey through life. Hereditary ties have chained him to the side of a petty grand duke, and the count's life has been spent in directing and controlling a duchy, the name of which you have probably never before heard."

"Oh, yes, I have," I answered. "You forget I lived in Germany for nearly

six years. The Grand Duke of Saxe-Cassel is reputed to be the wealthiest man in Germany."

She nodded quickly. "It is the count who has given him his wealth. The duke was comparatively a poor man thirty years ago. All the great manufactures that have sprung up in Cassel originated in the count's brain. It is strange that an unbroken line of aristocrats should evolve a shrewd commercial business man, and stranger still, one willing to devote his faculties unselfishly to the service of his master."

"Is the count staying at the castle?" I asked.

"He came a few days ago. That is why I sent for you. He said he would be glad to see you again. I think I am entitled to infer from this that he has decided to take you into his employment."

It seemed a somewhat slight foundation on which to build, and perhaps my face fell.

"You must not be disappointed if I am mistaken," she said, "or if he changes his mind. I don't know what has brought him to England, unless it is his usual errand."

"What is that?"

She laughed. "He usually comes when he wants to extract money from the pocket of the British investor. You haven't any money to invest, have you, Oswald?"

"No," I said, rather vexed at the irony of the question.

"The count usually tells me when he has a good thing to offer," observed the duchess.

"Well," said I, disinterestedly, "I hope he has a good thing this time."

The duchess shrugged her shoulders. "The count does not hold a brief for the British capitalist. But you may be sure he has the interest of the duchy at heart."

"Do you think I shall have to go to Germany?" I asked.

"I suppose so. I rather hope he will take you out of England. You have a most inconvenient resemblance to some of our family portraits."

"I am quite willing to leave Eng-

land," I answered, a little hurt at her desire to be rid of me. I was young and absurdly sensitive. "There is no one I care for here—except yourself," I added, with sudden politeness.

She smiled. "You are not in love with anyone in England, then?"

"I am not in love with anyone," I said, flushing, for I was at that susceptible age when most women were fit objects of adoration. "Not—not at the moment."

She looked at me kindly. "We must try and find you a nice little wife later on."

"Oh, pray, don't trouble," I replied, bashfully.

"Ah, well, perhaps you are still too young. Don't fall in love with the Princess Isa."

"Who is she?"

"The grand duke's only daughter. By the way, I understand her marriage is fixed for this month, so there is no danger."

The carriage had stopped. I sprang out and helped the duchess to alight.

"Welcome to Pendleton Castle," she said. "Ah, there is the count. Now do try to make a good impression."

CHAPTER V.

I was perfectly ready and willing to impress the count. As I dressed for dinner, I considered what demeanor I should adopt to this end. I decided finally to be calm and cold, with just a slight tinge of cynicism, varied by an occasional flash of wit, revealing a profound insight into human nature.

Unfortunately for my intention, we had hardly taken our seats at the dinner table when I upset a claret glass and flooded the tablecloth with wine. My self-possession and my cynicism alike vanished in blushing confusion and incoherent apologies. The duchess was extremely kind and did all she could to make me feel at ease, but I had an unpleasant feeling that the count was watching me with a constantly growing consternation. "Good Heavens, what an escape!" I imagined he was saying

to himself. "Fancy having this booby for a secretary!"

We finished dinner at length. The conversation had consisted chiefly of reminiscences of people dead and buried before I was born. Sometimes when the talk promised to grow interesting and the details to become human, the duchess would wag her forefinger warningly.

"We must not forget Oswald is present," she would say.

"I hope you are not going to send a poor old woman to solitude," she said, addressing me directly when the coffee was on the table and the servants had withdrawn. "I don't object to your smoking, and I don't see why you should object to my presence."

"I don't," I protested. "I hope you won't go away."

The count smiled, as he offered his cigar case. "I am glad Oswald has permitted you to remain," he said, "because I want to tell you why I have come to England."

"I hope you will let me have a marked prospectus," observed the duchess.

"Ah, no," replied the count. "I have not this time come to gladden the British speculator. That may come later. Alas, it is private business of a particularly difficult and unpleasant kind."

"And you are going to tell Oswald and myself?"

"You because I want your advice, and Oswald, because I need his aid."

"Oswald will make an excellent secretary," said the duchess. "He is very clever and trustworthy."

"Oswald will, I think, serve my purpose excellently," he acquiesced. "I have no doubt he is most trustworthy."

"I am so glad," said the duchess.

"You know, of course," continued the count, addressing the duchess but looking at me, "that the grand duke has two children. The elder is a girl of nineteen and the younger a boy barely sixteen. Perhaps you may have noticed that on the twenty-sixth of this month the marriage of the princess to the Duke of Hanau was fixed to have taken place. It would have been a most suitable match."

"Except, possibly, on the score of age," murmured the duchess.

"The duke is in the prime of manhood. He is twenty years younger than I am."

"You and I, count," remarked the duchess, "were born in the same year."

"You prove the duke's youth," said the count, gallantly. "In every respect was the marriage a desirable one. It was projected at my suggestion. I wish there was nothing I regret more."

"Well?"

"The marriage has been relinquished. Can you guess why?"

"I saw a paragraph in a newspaper which explained the postponement on the ground of the princess' indisposition."

"That is perfectly true."

"I hope her illness is not serious."

"She is not ill—merely absent."

"You don't mean," she said, after a pause, "that she has bolted?"

"She has left her home," replied the count, "and come to England."

"I hope," said the duchess, bluntly, "that she was—unaccompanied."

"Her brother was with her."

The duchess was relieved. "Ah, that's not so bad," she observed. "A brother is always respectable. And so you have come over to bring her back?"

"To find her," the count corrected.

"You don't know where she is?"

"I can find no trace," he explained.

"This is extremely interesting. Oswald, I hope you are listening attentively."

"If the grand duke had taken my advice," the count went on impressively, "this could never have happened. The grand duke thought fit"—he shrugged his shoulders resignedly—"to choose his own wife, and the result is what you see."

"The grand duchess died some years ago," remarked the duchess.

"Ah, but she was responsible for introducing British notions into a German palace. She sent the girl to an English school, and she made her children speak your language and read your books. I cannot understand the infatuation of some of our royalties for

English methods and customs, unless it is an instinctive reversion to barbarism. It was only to be expected that with her English ideas the girl should come to the conclusion that she was entitled to reject the husband selected for her. She has run away because she can't marry just whom she pleased."

"Then there is another man?" queried the duchess.

"Yes."

"Ah."

"Yes, there is another man," he said. "It is here the trouble begins."

"Who is he?" the duchess asked curiously.

The count paused for a moment. "He comes of a respectable family. He is the only son of a nobleman who holds a worthy position in the grand duchy. The princess saw much of him in the days of their childhood. But who could have dreamt? Certainly I never did. If only——"

"I am glad," said the duchess, composedly, "the man is of good birth. I think that greatly mends the matter."

The count grimaced violently, and seemed at a loss to find words. "Noble birth does not excuse a life of shame," he cried. "The fellow is a blackguard, a scoundrel, a common swindler. He was turned out of the army for cheating at cards. God help his poor father, for the burden of his son's iniquities is heavy on him!"

"You know for certain she has gone to this man?" the duchess inquired.

"She left a note saying she was going to England to marry the man she truly loved."

"But her brother is with her?"

"A lad of sixteen! But what will that avail? She has talked him over, and he no doubt believes he is acting for his sister's welfare. How can the boy Carl know the fellow's true character? For the father's sake, the son's misdeeds were hushed up and he was sent out of the country. It would have been better if he had suffered the penalty of his crimes. It was I who interceded for him, and it is my sovereign who has to bear the consequences of my folly."

"You did it for the poor father's

sake," the duchess said, softly. "You have no cause to blame yourself."

"Yes, you are right. I did it solely for the father's sake. That makes it all the more hard to bear."

"I wonder," said the duchess, "who the man is?"

"Oswald and I have a difficult task before us," he said. "It is to find the unhappy girl, and to convey her back to her bereaved father. But we have another duty, which is even more delicate; it is to prevent even a breath of scandal from tarnishing the princess' name."

"You are a good man," said the duchess, gently.

"Oswald and I must leave for town to-morrow. Every day is of vital importance. She has been in England over a week, and yet I cannot trace her. To-morrow I shall send Oswald to find her address."

"She has been in England over a week!" repeated the duchess. "Why, bless the man, she's sure to be already married."

"Ah, no; every movement of her lover is known to me. He is closely watched by my detectives. I had hoped to discover her whereabouts from his movements, but so far he has made no attempt to join her." He turned to me. "Now, Oswald, we have a difficult and even dangerous task before us. I trust——"

"Dangerous?" interrupted the duchess, suddenly. "In what way is it dangerous?"

"The man is a desperate character, and would not hesitate even to commit a murder if it would help him."

"A murder!" cried the duchess.

"Oswald must be prepared for everything," said the count, eyeing me, I thought, rather closely. "He must give no chances and take no unnecessary risks. To-morrow I shall send him to find the princess."

"And how can you expect him to find her, when you yourself have failed, with all your array of detectives?" The duchess had become quite excited.

"I shall send Oswald to the princess' lover to demand the information," said

the count, calmly. "It is obvious I cannot go myself. If I went, I should feel it my duty to put a bullet through his head."

"And from your description of the man," cried the duchess, "he will not hesitate to put a bullet through your head, or rather Oswald's, for you purpose to send the poor lad to him."

"Oswald is free to decline to enter my employment," said the count. "Can didly, I have no use for a young man who is easily frightened."

The duchess raised her hands with a despairing gesture. "This is not at all the kind of employment I desired for Oswald. Really, count, I must protest—"

"I am not frightened," I interposed, hastily. "And I hope, count, you will let me assist you."

He gave me a glance of approval. The duchess rose from her chair.

"Oswald is more suited for a nice, quiet government office. There is no reason why he should be set to fighting swindlers and rescuing princesses. In fact, I won't have it."

"Do you forbid Oswald to help me?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered, shortly.

"Oh, duchess," he said, "this is hardly the spirit of the old days."

"The old days are gone," she said, almost pleadingly, "and I am old—old."

"But Oswald is young."

"He has come back to me from the shadows of the past. I cannot let him go into danger. He would not come back to me a second time."

"I would die rather than cause you distress," he said, but I thought he was disappointed.

"You have no right to treat me as if I were a child," I burst in. "You left me to myself for twelve years, and now you interfere to injure my chances and—and—I must say I think—"

"I am acting in your interest," she said, softly, "and because I love you."

"I want to choose for myself," I cried, stubbornly.

"I have no right to command your obedience," she said at length. "It is

true I neglected you for many years. I reproach myself for that."

"You have nothing to reproach yourself for," I cried, impulsively. "I am sorry I spoke like that. I only wanted to say that every man ought to be allowed to decide for himself."

"Every man," she repeated, and smiled, suddenly. "Ah, yes, Oswald, you must forgive me forgetting that you are no longer a child. If I forget again, remind me again, but gently, for I am an old woman."

"I am full of regret," said the count, "that I have unwillingly caused this controversy. I assure you I can most readily find another assistant."

"No, no," said the duchess, "I have been in the wrong. I am old and full of fears; Oswald is young and full of courage. So let it be."

She went out of the room very quietly, and although I had scored my point, I felt no triumph.

CHAPTER VI.

The next morning the duchess breakfasted in her own room, and as the count and myself were due to start shortly after eleven, I began to wonder whether I should see her before I left. However, while I was smoking a cigarette on the lawn, she appeared on the terrace. I went to her.

"I am sorry you are leaving me so soon," she said.

"So am I," I answered.

"You are sure you have not changed your mind?"

"Oh, no," I replied, decidedly.

"You are a dear lad," she rejoined, "and I like you all the better for your simplicity. At the same time, I can't help feeling that a position in some government office, where ignorance of the world doesn't matter, would be ever so much more suitable."

"You underrate my knowledge of the world," I said, stiffly. "You forget that I have been to Oxford and am twenty-two years old."

"Are you really so old as that?" she

said, with simulated surprise. "I had got it into my head you were only seventeen."

"I must not lose my train," I said, greatly ruffled. "Good-day, madam."

"We are out of sight of the house, Oswald," she said, "so you may kiss me. That's right. Now run along, for the count will be getting impatient."

The count was already in the trap which was to drive us to the station, and I climbed in alongside of him. As we drove down the avenue we saw the duchess on the terrace waving her handkerchief, and the count flourished a newspaper in response.

"Oh, Oswald," he said, "what a woman she was in her prime!"

"Indeed," I answered, politely.

"She had the brain of a man, and the instinct of a woman."

We were far on the way to London before he showed himself inclined for conversation. Then, curling himself up in an extremely uncomfortable position, with his right foot tucked away beneath him and his left leg dangling across the middle arm of the seat on his side of the carriage, he began to talk with great fluency.

"You are my secretary," said he, "and I intend to pay you a salary of twenty pounds a month, which is two hundred and forty pounds a year. For so young a man this is a considerable sum, and I trust you will spare no effort to deserve it. That you are honest I know, for it is printed in large letters across your ingenuous face. I have it in my heart to wish the type was smaller."

"I can't help my face," I said, gruffly.

"The man we have to encounter is far more than a match for you," he went on, with a slight degree of complacency. "Yes, indeed, if you and he were left to each other, he would jump on you and trample you and knock the breath out of you, until you were entirely ignorant whether you were dead or alive. He would do all these things without exhibiting himself."

"I don't quite see how he is going to jump on me without showing himself, even if he is so very clever?" I answered, witheringly.

"It is all right," said the count, soothingly. "You need not be afraid. I am not so foolish as to leave you to him."

This did not console me, and I sat gloomily resolved to show the world in general, and my employer in particular, that I was a match for anyone. It is not altogether impossible that it was the count's intention to incite me to some such resolution.

Suddenly he began to talk of his son, and his voice quavered.

"Ah, God, why is he so wicked?" he cried.

Wilhelm, it appeared, was only twenty-five years old. When he was eighteen he obtained a commission in the German army. At twenty-two his energies took the form of spirited gaming, which led him to forge his father's name in order to pay his debts of honor. This the old gentleman forgave on the ground, so he informed me, that it was "Wilhelm's first serious crime." Unluckily, however, it was not his last, for he took to swindling the young officers with whom he came into contact. The grand duke became restless, and did not at all regard it as a mitigating circumstance that the fleeing was executed with brilliant precision and success, and with a wealth of resource which the count, I could see, could hardly abstain from admiring. So Wilhelm was dispatched to England, and instructions were given to his father's man of business to pay him a moderate sum on the first of every month.

"I have cast him off," said the count, and waved his skinny arms in the air; "but in my heart of hearts I love him dearly. He is my only son. I see myself reflected even in his wickedness; yet there is a difference, for I have never schemed for myself."

It was the Princess Isa whom he mentioned next. Of her, the count seemed to have no great opinion. He told me candidly he disliked the type of woman who insisted on her own way, and fought recklessly against the shadow of constraint. A woman, he thought, should be gentle and docile, long-suffering and obedient, and should find her sufficient reward in man's approval. He be-

moaned his failure to notice the attachment the princess had contracted. She had never shown a sign of it, although he admitted she had opposed her suggested alliance with the Duke of Hanau. The count did not go into details, but I gathered there had been a violent conflict of wills between him and the girl.

"The marriage was a desirable one in the interest of the duchy," he said. "It was my duty to insist. She pretended to give way, and a day was fixed for the ceremony. And then she and her brother suddenly disappeared."

"Did you try to stop them?" I asked.

"Their absence was noticed within an hour of their disappearance, and yet we could not trace them. It was remarkable. I cannot understand it unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless Wilhelm's hand was in it. That would explain much."

"Wilhelm?" I exclaimed. "What has Wilhelm to do with the princess?"

The count regarded me moodily. "I thought perhaps you would have guessed. Most persons could not have failed to have done so."

I brooded over all that he had told me.

"You haven't mentioned the name of the man," I said at length.

"What man?"

"The princess' lover."

"His name is Wilhelm."

"Your—your son?" I ventured.

"Are you trying to appear stupid?" he replied. "Of course it is my son. That is the trouble."

I was astonished at his vehemence, which struck me as ludicrous.

"What we have to do," he explained, when he grew calmer, "is to prevent Wilhelm marrying the princess. At the present time she has no money, and Wilhelm has only his allowance, which I shall stop. Our strength lies in their poverty. Wilhelm will probably do anything for immediate funds, and my view is that the best and quickest way out of this mess is to buy him off."

"But if he loves her—"

"Bah! Wilhelm loves no one but himself. I believe he will do anything for a few thousands. Of course, he will

not scruple to take the bribe and then marry the girl. That we must prevent."

"What do you propose?"

"In the first place, find out where the girl is at all costs. Until I can have her under my eyes, I am consumed by anxiety."

"How are you going to find her address?" I asked.

"That is to be your business," he answered. "This afternoon you will go and see Mr. Parsons, the solicitor, through whom I pay Wilhelm his allowance."

"Do you mean Mr. Parsons, of Lincoln's-Inn-Fields?"

"Yes. You will go to him this afternoon, and get Wilhelm's present address. He will tell you if his detectives have reported anything fresh."

"And when I have his address?"

"You will go and see him. Offer him fifty pounds for the princess' address. I believe he is at his last gasp for money, and he may give it out of sheer desperation."

"If he won't?"

"Then offer him a hundred, but not more, without my further instructions. Do you understand?"

"I am to give him a hundred pounds, if necessary—"

"You are not to give him a farthing," he snapped. "What is to prevent him giving you false information?"

"But—"

"You will promise him the sum."

"But you have told me Wilhelm is no fool."

"You are quite right. You can give him your word of honor you will pay him if the information turns out correct. Wilhelm will probably accept the word of honor of a man with a face like yours."

"Who will verify the information?"

I asked, wincing at the compliment.

"I shall," said the count. "Let me know her address, and I start for it at once, though it is in the wilds of Arabia."

"And if it is true?"

"Oh, you can refer him to me for payment."

I pondered over this for some min-

utes. "If I cannot redeem my word of honor," I said at length, "I shall not give it."

"You need not be so scrupulous," said the count. "The man is a scoundrel."

"But I am not."

He smiled not ill-naturedly. "I will write you a check for a hundred pounds, and if you like you can cash it before you call on Wilhelm. So your mind can be at rest."

"Very well," I answered.

"At the same time," he went on, warningly, "I forbid you to part with a penny of it till you receive a wire from me that the information is correct."

CHAPTER VII.

I had come across Mr. Parsons more than once since my first interview with him, but it was always with reluctance I went to his office. On the present occasion he received me with the civility which always seemed to veil a fixed determination not to give himself away.

"I hope," he said, after our first greetings, "you are getting on well at college."

"I have left Oxford," I answered.

"Oh, indeed. Did you take your degree?"

"Of course."

"I congratulate you. And what are you thinking of doing?"

"I am already at work," I replied, pleased at scoring a point.

"What is your employment?" he asked.

"Count Darnsdorf has made me his confidential secretary."

"Count Darnsdorf!" The lawyer was surprised, and I was correspondingly gratified. "I am very pleased to hear this. The count is a client of mine."

"It is on his business I am here this morning. The count has commissioned me to see his son, Wilhelm, and I have called to ascertain if you have any fresh information about his movements."

The lawyer's tone was much more deferential than usual. "The detective's last report gives very little further in-

formation. Wilhelm is still at 17 Wix Street, Soho, and he still passes under the name of William Brown."

"I am going to call on Wilhelm this afternoon," I said, rising. "Will you kindly keep the count advised of any further developments?"

"Certainly." He eyed me a little curiously. "I wish you good luck in your new sphere."

On leaving Lincoln's Inn-Fields, I took a cab to Wix Street. It is a mournful little street, with houses that seem to realize they have nothing to boast about, and that the less said, the sooner mended. I dismissed my cab, and discovered No. 17 to be the house with the hall door wide open. A great, blowsy woman, with bare arms and a wreath of white roses, which on closer inspection proved to be curl papers, emerged from somewhere and regarded me with a noncommittal air.

"Yes?" she asked.

"Does Mr. William Brown live here, please?"

"Upstairs, first door on the left," she replied. "Do you come from his lawyer?"

I hesitated. Was Mr. Parsons his lawyer? "Do—do you mean Mr. Parsons?"

"Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, ain't it?"

"Yes, that's right."

She brightened. "He's been wanting to see you. Here, I'll go and tell him. I hope to goodness you've brought him some money." She turned and mounted the stairs at the end of the passage, leaving me to follow in her wake. "He's in bed, you know," she threw over her shoulder. "It's washing day."

Considerably bewildered, I loitered on the landing while, with a hasty knock, she dived into a room. "The old skin flint has sent at last," I heard her say, as she closed the door. In a minute or two, she emerged and beckoned me to enter.

The room was small, and across the window a newspaper was pinned. In the corner was a bed, and under a patchwork quilt lay a young man, smoking a cigarette and surrounded by penny novelettes.

"Good-afternoon," said he.

"Good-afternoon. Are you Mr. William Brown?" I asked.

"That is what I call myself. Won't you sit down?"

I glanced round. There did not seem to be any chair.

"There is the wash-hand-stand," he said. "But perhaps you would prefer to stand."

"Thank you, yes."

"It will be safer, perhaps," he observed. "I have so few visitors that I do not make elaborate preparations."

"I hope you are not ill," I said.

"Not at all. It is washing day, that's all."

I showed my astonishment.

"Don't you go to bed on washing day?" he asked, with apparent surprise. "Surely you don't go about without any underclothing? What an extremely unpleasant habit!"

"Do you mean," I said, bluntly, "you are in bed because you haven't a change of underclothes?"

"You have guessed it, gentle stranger," he answered. "You've come from that miserly old brute, Parsons? Have you brought me any money?"

"No, I don't think so."

"You—don't—think—so!"

"The count has stopped your allowance," I said, briefly.

"Well, what's his offer?" he said at length.

"What offer?"

"I suppose you haven't come here simply to leave your card?" he said, with a show of irritation. "Why did you come?"

"I come from the count," I answered.

"You want to know where the princess is?"

"Yes, that is why I have come."

"How much?"

"The renewal of your allowance."

"I shall require two hundred pounds."

"Well, you won't get it."

"Will he give me a hundred?"

"N-no."

He gave a satisfied smile. "One hundred pounds is the figure," he said. "Well, it might be worse. Hand it over, and I will give you the address."

"I'll give you fifty," I said.

"One hundred, or you can go back to my dear father and tell him you have failed in your mission."

"The count might give seventy-five."

"Pray, don't play with me, sir," he said, with severity. "Look here, my friend," he said, "I will accept seventy-five pounds if you will give me your solemn word that the count has not authorized you to pay one hundred pounds."

"Give me the address," I said, sullenly, "and you shall have the money."

"It will be more in accordance with ordinary business precautions if you pay the money first."

"The count has forbidden me to pay anything until your information has been verified."

He eyed me thoughtfully. "Right you are," he said, suddenly. "I can trust you. Give me a pencil, and I will write the address down."

I gave him a pencil, and he scribbled something on the back of the fly leaf of the novelette beside him. "There you are, my friend, and an exciting story into the bargain."

CHAPTER VIII.

"I've made a mistake," said the count, when I had recounted my experiences with his son.

"In what way?" I ventured, rather timidly, for I realized no greater mistake than the choice of myself as his agent.

"If Wilhelm is at the end of his resources," said the count, "it is the height of unwisdom to put him in funds. Without money, his power for evil is necessarily limited, but this hundred pounds will furnish him with weapons against ourselves."

"I quite agree," I said.

"What else was there to be done?" he asked, sharply.

"Nothing, so far as I can see," I answered.

"Then how could it be unwise to adopt the only course open to us?" he asked, triumphantly; and I had no reply. "For the moment," he went on,

more cheerfully, "he is penniless, and that is so much to the good."

I struggled with the temptation to suppress a certain fact, but my natural honesty triumphed.

"Well," I said, shamefacedly, "he is not quite penniless. In fact, I lent—he borrowed ten pounds. Out of my own money, of course."

"Oh," said the count. He looked at me whimsically. I had expected an outburst of abuse, for I realized that my loan was not diplomatic. But the count, as I found out subsequently, seldom blamed a subordinate.

After a few moments' further thought, he rang the bell, and his servant, Fritz, appeared.

"Fritz," he said, "I have received information that the princess is staying at"—he scanned the writing on the page of the penny novelette—"Myra Cottage, Marine Road, Oban. Get an ABC, and find out where Oban is."

"Oban is in the western highlands of Scotland," I said.

"Scotland! Then, Fritz, you leave for Scotland to-night. Understand, however, I do not wish the princess to see you. I merely wish to ascertain if she is living at this address, and, if so, under what name."

"Yes, sir," replied Fritz.

"I shall expect a telegram from you in the course of to-morrow. Do not telegraph to me but to Mr. Chapman."

"Yes, sir," said Fritz, and retired.

"If the information is accurate," the count went on, thoughtfully, "I think a hundred pounds is a cheap price to pay."

I brightened up at this. "Your son will probably call to-morrow for the money."

The count twisted round. "I will not see him, you understand. Under no circumstances am I to see him."

"There is no reason why you should," I said, rather surprised at the old gentleman's agitation. "I am to see him, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes; if you have received Fritz's telegram verifying the information. I am not afraid to encounter my own son in a war of wits. Now you are begin-

ning to understand why the princess has fled from home and reputation at his call. He has charmed her, as he charms everyone. What a power he might have exercised for good, if the devil had not lodged in his heart."

I felt for the poor little man, gesticulating and trembling by my side, and I began to stammer words of consolation. Suddenly he dropped my arm and turned away.

"I love him very much," he said, calmly; "yet I shall have no pity on him."

The next day, late in the afternoon, I received a telegram from Fritz, which ran as follows:

"Just seen the princess at address named; calls herself Miss Dobson. Awaiting further orders. Wire Alexandra Hotel."

I handed the telegram to the count, who read it, and returned it to me without comment.

"We must be ready to start for Oban to-night," he remarked.

"To-night?" I repeated.

"There is no train before then," he said, severely.

"Of course, I am ready to start at any moment."

"Wilhelm will waste no time," he said; "of that I feel sure. Has he not sent for the money?"

"Not yet," I replied. At that moment the door opened, and a waiter came to inform me that a gentleman wished to see me.

I followed the man from the room, and found Wilhelm in the entrance hall. I hardly recognized him, so greatly was his appearance changed. His silk hat and linen were immaculate; he wore a carnation in his buttonhole, and carried a malacca cane in his carefully gloved hands. It was only on a more particular scrutiny I noticed that the weak spot in his attire was his frock coat, which, though obviously new, showed in its lack of fit and finish that it was a ready-made garment. His tall, slim figure carried it well, and no one could have mistaken him for other than a gentleman.

"How do you do?" he said, and ex-

tended his hand. "What a charming foyer this hotel has! I have not been accustomed to such magnificence in Wix Street."

"Won't you sit down?" I said, with some embarrassment.

"Oh, never mind," he observed kindly. "Have you those notes ready? To tell the truth, I haven't enough of your ten pounds left to get lunch, and I am deucedly hungry."

I had the money in my waistcoat pocket, and I produced it.

"Thanks, very much," he said, taking the notes nonchalantly. He separated a ten-pound note from the others, which he pocketed without counting. "Very many thanks for your kind loan, which I hasten to repay. Will you do me the honor of lunching with me?"

"I am sorry, but I have already lunched." I took the note which he extended to me.

"Of course. It is past four o'clock. Ah, I am not so fortunate. Well, *auf wiedersehen*."

"Good-by."

"Not good-by," he corrected. "We may meet again, and very shortly. Strangely enough, I am leaving for Scotland to-night. Give my kind remembrances to my dear father."

CHAPTER IX.

Being under orders to leave for Scotland that night, it became necessary to put some clothes together if I was not to have recourse to Wilhelm's methods of economizing underlinen. I took a 'bus down Piccadilly to my modest rooms in Knightsbridge. It was the height of the season, and there was the usual block halfway towards Hyde Park Corner. From the top of my 'bus I was able to look down upon the other vehicles jammed with it in a chaotic mass. My eye fell on an imposing equipage, and with some flutterings of the heart I found myself contemplating the feather in my grandmother's bonnet. She was alone in her carriage, and the coachman and footman on the box were contemplating the back of the inexorable po-

liceman who barred their progress with superb disdain. I caught her eye. I blushed and bowed; she nodded and beckoned.

"Come down," cried the duchess, shocking the young footman.

I left my seat and made my way to her. I quite forgot, in my confusion, I had not paid my fare, and was greatly embarrassed to find the grimy hand of the 'bus conductor stretched beneath my nose.

"There is no cause why you should look so hot and uncomfortable," observed the duchess, good-humoredly. "Why can't you take things calmly?"

"I am not in the least uncomfortable," I replied, rather snappishly.

"I was so bored at Pendleton after you had left," she said, "that I was forced to come up to town. I was on my way to your rooms to see if I could induce you to dine with me this evening."

"I have to leave for Oban by the night express," I said, importantly, "and I am afraid I shall not have a moment to spare."

"What, is the girl at Oban? You have found out where she is? Now, that is really very smart of you."

This was very pleasant to hear, and I began to wonder whether, after all, the merit was not mine.

"Oban," she repeated, thoughtfully. "We have a shooting-box at Dalavich, which is only fourteen or fifteen miles from the town. There is excellent fishing there, if you have any time on your hands."

"I don't suppose we shall be there long," I replied.

"It might be a good place to lock up the young woman if she proved troublesome," observed the duchess. "A nice, quiet and secluded spot, and no police within ten miles."

"There won't be anything of that kind," I said, aghast. "In Scotland! What would the papers say?"

"The incident would not be communicated to the press," said the duchess, placidly. "However, the count will know the best course to adopt."

"I will tell him," I said, dubiously.

I never knew when the duchess was joking.

"You can never tell," said the duchess, sagely. "In any case, I will warn the caretaker to be prepared for visitors. Is the man at Oban with her?"

"The count has not given me full information," I said, guardedly. "Perhaps he will tell me more later on."

"You don't take me in," she said, genially, "but I am glad to see you are cautious. You are perfectly right, although a grandmother is surely to be trusted." She waited for a moment as if to give me an opportunity of putting this to the test, but I remained dumb. "Well, I hope you will be able to keep the girl out of mischief. Don't fall in love with her yourself, and, above all, don't let her fall in love with you."

"There is no fear of either of these things occurring."

"By the way, Oswald," said the duchess, suddenly, "there is one thing I forgot to say to you yesterday. When your mother died she left all her letters and papers in the cottage. I had them put into a box and taken to the castle. I saw to this myself. Most of them were letters from your father to her. Naturally, I did not want any curious person to examine them and rake up a dead scandal. What do you want done with them?"

"I would like to look through the letters before they are destroyed."

Later in the afternoon, having packed my bag, I drove back to the hotel. I went at once to the count's private room, and found him screwed up in a capacious armchair, his legs crossed in Turkish fashion and his head in his hands. In this attitude he seemed to be studying the pattern on the carpet.

"Heaven help the princess!" was his greeting. "It is some comfort, however, to know that she will deserve all she gets."

"Is there any news?" I asked.

"Yes, I must leave for Germany to-night."

"What?"

"The grand duke is seriously ill—probably dying. I must go to him at once. It is essential."

"How do you know the duke is ill?" I asked, bluntly.

He indicated a foreign telegram that lay on the table.

"Who sent that? Are you sure it isn't a trick of Wilhelm's?" I asked.

A faint smile twisted his lips. "It is a relief to hear you make that remark. It shows you do not underestimate Wilhelm's ingenuity. But, no; it is not Wilhelm's doing. It is fate—a cursed fate, which meddles from pure malevolence."

"And you must go at once?"

"Yes, at once."

"And the princess?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "You must do your best."

"Alone?" I cried.

"I suppose so," he said, irritably. "Who else is there? You can have Fritz, if you like, but he is a fool."

I sat down slowly. I could feel my heart beating.

"What am I to do?" I asked, feebly.

"You have two alternatives, and you may be successful with one or the other."

"What are these two?" My brain was in a whirl.

"In the first place, you must endeavor to frighten the princess. You must work on her feeble woman's mind, until she voluntarily relinquishes all notion of marrying Wilhelm. Do not let Wilhelm deceive her with specious promises. Let her fully comprehend the dire consequences of her mad act if persisted in. If you can once get her out of Wilhelm's clutches, and can lock her up in a cellar till I can get back to you, do so, by all means. I don't care what you do, provided you avoid all scandal."

"I am to lock up the princess in a cellar without causing a scandal," I repeated, hopelessly. And then the absurdity of the suggestion came home to me, and I laughed.

"Pray don't take me too literally," said the count. "I only mean you are to follow whatever course commends itself to you, remembering the one object we have in view."

I tried to bring my thoughts into

coherence. "Instead of a cellar, would a shooting-box do?"

"A box?" he repeated, evidently not understanding me. "By all means, provided you make a few air holes."

I laughed again, and the count laughed, too—an angry, irritated laugh, but his face clouded quickly. "There are things more important than a woman's honor," he said. "I would have done my best for her. Yes, I would have saved her from a life of misery. But I must listen to a louder call, and my place at this moment is in my own country. God only knows what confusion would come if I am absent from my post when the grand duke dies. And the princess"—he shrugged his shoulders—"must take her chance."

"I will do my best," I murmured.

He stared up at me. "If you were of our blood I should tell you your duty, and if you were a true son of your country you would do it."

"What would be my duty?" I asked.

"It would be to put a bullet through my son's black heart, and then to go cheerfully to the scaffold."

"I don't propose to adopt that course," I said, blankly.

"I do not expect you to do so," he responded, with a sudden smile. "That is not the second alternative to which I alluded."

"I am relieved to hear that," I said.

"I have paid ten thousand pounds to your banking account. You are at liberty to expend it how you please in the pursuit of your object."

"You mean I am to buy Wilhelm off?"

"If you can. Then, that is all. Stay, do you want Fritz?"

I hesitated. The count had said Fritz was a fool.

"He is essential to my personal comfort," said the count. "Without him my razors go unstrapped, and my wig loses its curl. Yet if you want him, you have only to say so."

That determined me. "No, thanks. I will do what I can alone."

"Good luck," said the count, and he tried to smile cheerfully, but I heard him groan as I went down the stairs.

CHAPTER X.

When I reached King's Cross at eleven o'clock, I had only begun to recover from the mental confusion into which the count's abrupt withdrawal from our joint enterprise had plunged me. I found myself endeavoring to plan out some scheme of action, but I had always to relinquish my effort from an inability to grasp the situation. The whole position seemed so preposterous.

I stood still, and stared vacantly at the bustling throng on the platform. When the porter who carried my bag asked me what class I was traveling, I was laughing to myself, for my fancy was depicting a beautiful princess, with long golden hair, being dragged through the streets of a Highland town by a shy young man, in search of a cellar. After I had taken my seat in an empty first-class carriage, I continued to bubble with amusement, for the more I considered it, the more farcical appeared the nature of my adventure.

I continued to splutter with laughter until the train began to move. At that moment, some one snatched open the door and sprang in; and then my smiles died away very quickly, for the newcomer was Wilhelm.

"Hello," said he.

"Hello," said I.

"So you've left the old man behind?" he observed, taking off his ulster, and throwing it and his hand bag into the rack.

I made no answer. It was apparent the "old man" was not with me, unless he was concealed beneath the seat.

"I hope you are not averse to conversation," he said. "I feel in a particularly talkative mood."

"I do not think we can have anything in common," I said, curtly.

"I can't help wondering," he said, pleasantly enough, "what you intend doing at Oban."

"That is my business."

"It happens to be mine, also," he responded. "For are we not on the same errand?"

"Quite different," I said, pretending to stifle a yawn.

"That's true," he said, thoughtfully. "Yours is more despicable than mine."

"Impossible," I said, emphatically.

He became serious. "Is it not contemptible to try and separate two loving, faithful hearts?"

"I only admit one loving, faithful heart," I replied, with scorn.

"Well, well, perhaps you are right," he answered with easy tolerance. "Women are proverbially inconstant."

This was not to be borne. I took the pipe out of my mouth. "You spoke of a despicable errand. What can be more despicable than to endeavor to entrap a young, inexperienced girl into a marriage which you know will be an invalid one?"

"Her marriage will be valid enough."

"You know the contrary," I retorted, with heat.

He smiled. "Do you think the grand duke will allow his daughter to bear the odium of an irregular connection when by a word he can regularize it?"

"And you count on that?" I asked, with contempt.

"I count on nothing. For my part, I don't care a straw whether he consents or not. However, I am interested in the expression of your views, which I assume will be placed in due form before the princess. I fancy she will not be greatly impressed."

He made no further remark, and I moved to the opposite corner of the carriage, and, wrapping my rug around me, tried to sleep. He lit a cigar, and closing his eyes, seemed lost in meditation.

About three o'clock, when the dawn was beginning to dominate the darkness, I gave up the attempt to sleep, and, sitting up, lit a pipe. Wilhelm also opened his eyes.

"I suppose you haven't got a spare pipe you could lend me?" he said, and smiled. He certainly had a winning smile. "I have finished all my cigars, and want to smoke badly."

"I should think you have smoked quite enough for one night."

"I quite realize it is impudence on my part to ask you for anything," he observed. "But, somehow, I don't feel on antagonistic terms with you."

I even felt flattered when he asked me for some tobacco. He made a remark about its superiority to the sort he was accustomed to use, and I felt that even in the choice of tobacco I showed remarkable discrimination. In a few minutes we were chatting, without even a sense of constraint on my side. He deferred to my opinion in the most courteous way possible, and I was delighted by his immediate recognition of the profundity and subtle reasoning underlying my slightest remarks. I plumed myself that he was beginning to realize that he had no simpleton to deal with, but one able to meet him on equal terms.

"By the way," said he, "have you authority to buy me off?"

"The count has given me plenary powers," I answered, after a pause, a little importantly.

"Ah, but has he given you the cash?" asked Wilhelm.

"Oh, a thousand or so," I replied, with a wave of the hand.

"I could not take less than five thousand," he said, quickly.

"It is curious you should have fixed on that figure," I made answer, with fine cunning.

"That is the sum, is it?"

"I have not said so," I answered, with a confusion, which I am proud to say, was simulated. "But I'll give you a thousand pounds if you'll undertake—"

"Five thousand is the lowest I can take."

"Do you really mean you would be prepared to give up the woman you love if you are paid enough?"

"Money is what I want. I must have money."

"This," said I, "is disgusting."

A look of amusement passed over his face. "You are shocked? My want of hypocrisy is too much for your weak stomach. Ah, my friend, if we have many dealings together you will find I have no hesitation in describing my own actions in their proper terms. I have no defense, except my desire for money. It is the motive force that actuates us all. Most men are prepared to sell their

souls for it, but I am perhaps singular in admitting the fact."

"But the poor girl? Have you no consideration for her?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "A petulant tomboy of a girl! If I married her, I should desert her as soon as I had her fortune."

"I shall tell her what you say."

"Of course. Why not?" His eyes mocked me. I began to wonder if his shocking cynicism was real or assumed.

"Do you love no woman?"

"Yes, there is one woman in the whole of the wide world whom I love, and for whom I would willingly die. She is an English governess, with a pure white soul. She is poor and friendless. Her life has passed in hard places. If she will marry me, I think I might become a respectable member of society."

"Does she love you?"

"I believe so."

"Then why not marry her?"

"Because she will not. She is too honest."

I pondered his words. "Where did you meet her?"

"In Cassel. She came to the palace as a companion for the princess. She knows of the princess' infatuation for me, and so loyal is she to her, that she refuses to listen to me. She left Cassel two years ago. Perhaps it was my persistence that drove her away. Ah, Mina, Mina, it is a cursed fate that keeps us apart!"

"And where is she now?"

He looked up quickly. "Surely you can guess. The princess fled to her cottage in Oban."

It was impossible to conceive a more perfect ending to my anxious enterprise. I bent over and touched Wilhelm's knee. I know my face was aglow with excitement.

"I will pay you five thousand pounds on the day you marry this young lady."

Wilhelm shook his head. "It will not be possible to persuade her."

"Perhaps," said I, "I—I might be able to make her understand."

"You can try," said Wilhelm. "I must confess I have little hope."

But I bade him be of good cheer. I

think I more than hinted that he might safely lean on me.

CHAPTER XI.

We reached Stirling at about half-past eight. For the last few hours Wilhelm had slumbered peacefully, and I had remained awake, revolving possibilities. Never was a child more delighted with a new plaything than I was with my own idea. The more I considered it, the more pleased I was with it. Once married, Wilhelm's power for evil was at an end.

At Stirling, Wilhelm and I made a bolt for the refreshment room for breakfast. He was ready to return to the carriage, when I was chipping my second egg. I finished my meal leisurely, and I had still five minutes after discharging my bill, and I decided to send a wire to the count, the purport of which I had already framed in my mind. "All going well. Wilhelm fallen into my trap," were the words I had fixed upon. I made my way to the telegraph office, and, curiously enough, encountered Wilhelm emerging.

"I have just wired to the Alexandra Hotel, at Oban, to retain a room," he said, easily. "I should advise you to do the same."

I thanked him, and he left me, and made his way back to the train. I sent off my telegram to the count, adding my address at the Alexandra, and joined him.

"I suppose you will call on the princess as soon as you arrive?" he asked.

"I suppose so."

"If you do decide to speak to Mina—Mina Dobson is her full name—you will use tact."

"I think you can trust me," I responded, with dignity.

"Of course I can," he answered. "I only wanted to warn you that a too hasty approach to this delicate subject might defeat your ends. By the way, did I mention that the princess is passing as Mina's sister? Don't you think

it will be desirable to preserve the princess' *incognita* for the time being?"

"Most certainly," I replied, remembering the count's injunctions against a scandal.

"Have you any idea as to future movements?" he asked. "Do you propose to remain at Oban for long?"

I considered this point, which, to be truthful, had not occurred to me before. "I think it will be best to get them both to move to some quieter place than Oban—until we can come to some arrangement concerning Miss Dobson and yourself."

"I agree with you entirely," he answered, with a trace of eagerness.

"The Duchess of Pendleton has very kindly placed her shooting-box at my disposal," I observed.

"Where is it? and who is the Duchess of Pendleton?"

"It is at Dalavich, about fifteen miles from Oban. The duchess is a—friend of mine."

"Is there a church there?"

"A church! Sure to be. There is no lack of churches in Scotland."

"I suppose if Mina is willing, our banns might be put up there?"

"A very excellent notion," I observed, with approval.

"But that will take some weeks. Is there no quicker way?"

"You might get a special license."

Wilhelm fingered his mustache thoughtfully. "If Mina consents at all, I am afraid she will resent undue haste. However, we must see how things turn out."

"Well," I said, "why not be called in the usual way? After all, a few weeks in the highlands will be not unpleasant at this time of year."

"Oh, not at all," said he, but without enthusiasm.

"I suppose Carl, the grand duke's son, will not mind the change of locality?" I said.

He looked at me abstractedly. "Carl? He is not here. Of course, he has returned to Germany."

"I did not know that."

"Bless my soul, his father may be dying, and he is the heir to the duchy.

Naturally, when I wired to the princess of the grand duke's illness, the boy would hasten back."

"You don't know he is actually gone?"

"Can there be a doubt? One does not play fast and loose when thrones are at stake."

"I am glad he is out of the way," I said. "That may prevent complications."

"Carl is a good lad," said Wilhelm, "and I have considerable influence over him. When he succeeds the grand duke, I should not be astonished if my father experienced considerable changes. Ah, we shall see!"

"He is only a lad, isn't he?"

"Sixteen or so. I really forget his age."

"How old is Miss Dobson?"

"Ah, Mina is—let me see—about twenty. Would you like to see her picture?" He produced a photograph from his pocket and handed it to me. It showed a beautiful face, with large, clear eyes. The line of the mouth seemed to indicate considerable firmness.

"Very nice indeed," I said, politely.

"I should think she has a good deal of character."

"It does not do her justice. Oh, she is very beautiful." He kissed the photograph devotedly before returning it to his pocket.

About two in the afternoon we reached Oban. Taking Wilhelm's advice, I drove with him to the Alexandra Hotel, and lunched with him. He suggested that, later in the afternoon, we should call together on the princess.

Myra Villa was little more than a cottage standing on the outskirts of Oban, overlooking the bay. In front was a little neglected garden inclosed by a wooden paling. An abode more unsuitable for the daughter of a grand duke could hardly be conceived. In front of the gate, Wilhelm and I stopped by a common impulse.

"Shall I go in first to prepare them?"

he said. "Or shall we go in together?"

"Together," I replied, firmly.

I thought Wilhelm appeared slightly

nervous as he pushed open the wooden gate and as we passed up the patch in front of the cottage. He knocked on the plain wooden door with his stick, for there was neither bell nor knocker. There was no answer, and he tapped again. We heard steps at length, and the latch was lifted, and I came face to face with the original of the photograph.

"Mina!" cried Wilhelm. The girl flushed scarlet.

"You have come!" she murmured.

Wilhelm held out his hands, and after a moment's hesitation she let hers meet them. He drew her close and kissed her.

"Ah, no!" she cried, and drew herself back. Her eyes caught mine, and I looked away uncomfortably.

"This is Mr. Oswald Chapman," said Wilhelm, perfectly at ease. "He is the emissary of my wicked father."

"Won't you come in?" she said, and made to let us pass.

"Is the princess in?" Wilhelm asked, carelessly.

"Yes, she is within," said Mina. "Come, and have some tea. The princess is longing to see you."

I followed Mina down the dark passage and into a room that opened from it. It was a plainly furnished little apartment, and as one entered, it was with the inclination to bow the head to avoid the low lintel. A young girl was sitting with her back to the window, nervously twisting her fingers. She looked up rather shyly as I entered. I noticed her face was severely freckled, and that she had well-cut features and a mass of auburn hair, done up loosely in a massive plait behind her back.

"This is Mr. Chapman, the gentleman the count has sent," said Mina, introducing me.

"Oh, indeed," said the princess. She regarded me curiously. "Why, you are quite young."

At that moment Wilhelm entered. The princess, who had resumed her seat, rose in great excitement, shrieked "Wilhelm!" and fled to his arms.

"Dear old Dobbs!" said Wilhelm.

The girl laughed and giggled, and hid

her face on his shoulder. "Oh, Wilhelm, how good it is to see you again. How do you think I look?"

"You look as beautiful as ever." He placed his hands on either side of her head, and imprinted, as I thought, a somewhat cold salute on her forehead. Mina looked away. I quite understood her feelings.

The girl broke from Wilhelm, laughing uproariously, and, as I thought, hysterically. I expected a scene, and was relieved when Mina distracted attention from her charge by calling on us all to help her to make tea.

I relapsed into thoughtfulness. I had never before met a princess, yet I had my notions how a princess should behave. Now, if Mina had been the princess, I could have accepted the situation without demur. Her slow, graceful movements, the sad look in her eyes, the charm of her sudden smile, made her look every inch a princess. But that wild tomboy of a girl, so awkward and *gauche*—she a princess! It struck me as preposterous. Could it be that Wilhelm was endeavoring to palm off some mysterious damsel as the Princess Isa? She spoke English without a foreign accent, and here was another ground for suspicion.

I felt my gloomy concentration on my own thoughts was becoming marked, and I roused myself.

"Mr. Chapman thinks," observed Wilhelm, "that we should all migrate together to some more secluded spot."

This was not what I had suggested.

"The count thinks," I said, "that it would be better if we were to stay——"

"We!" interjected the princess. "Are you joining our happy party permanently?"

"Yes," I said, defiantly, and glared at them all.

"Very pleased, I'm sure," said the princess, demurely, smoothing the front of her dress. "So convenient, Wilhelm. Mr. Chapman can be your best man."

"The Duchess of Pendleton has kindly placed her shooting-box at our—the princess' disposal. It is more private than Oban. There is less risk of a scandal——"

"A scandal!" ejaculated the princess. "I mean," I said, hurriedly, "you are less likely to be recognized than in Oban. There is no object in giving rise to idle talk."

"That is true," said Mina, thoughtfully. "Yes, I quite agree with you, Mr. Chapman. Where is the shooting-box?"

"It is at Dalavich, only fifteen miles or so from here."

Mina looked towards Wilhelm, who nodded. "Very well, Mr. Chapman," she said, "we are at your disposal."

"The wedding can take place at Dalavich as well as anywhere else, I suppose," remarked the princess, indifferently.

"The question of your marriage must remain for the time being in abeyance," I said, firmly.

"What time will you be ready to start to-morrow? I will order a conveyance, and we will drive there."

"After lunch," said Mina, after a moment's thought. "Say three o'clock. Will that suit everyone?" The question was general, but she glanced at Wilhelm.

"There is only the princess and yourself to consider," I said.

"What, isn't Wilhelm coming?" cried the princess.

"Certainly not," said I.

"Then I don't go, either."

"I—I think perhaps we had better go," said Mina.

Wilhelm turned. "Yes, it is best—for the present."

"Oh, of course, if you wish it," said the princess. "But you will come over and see us often?"

"I think there will be no objection to that," said Wilhelm, looking at me.

"Oh, none at all," I replied, rather reluctantly. "I could not expect him to keep away from Mina altogether."

As there seemed nothing more to do, I picked up my hat and bowed my adieux to the ladies. Wilhelm rose at once. "I'm coming, also," he said.

As we walked homewards towards our hotel, we passed a post office. I turned to Wilhelm suddenly and asked

him if he had a photograph of the princess. He answered in the negative.

"If you will excuse me," I said, precipitately, "I will send a wire."

He laughed. "Do you know, I can almost always read your thoughts?"

"I am going to wire to the caretaker at the lodge to prepare for our arrival," I said, stiffly.

"Then I am mistaken."

But probably he was not.

CHAPTER XII.

There was a brisk breeze blowing and a blue sky overhead, with white clouds scampering across it, when I turned up the next day at Myra Cottage with the vehicle which was to convey us to the duchess' shooting lodge. It was the best conveyance I could obtain—a brake seated for six a side and drawn by a pair of horses. The princess elected to seat herself by the coachman, and took her place with the exhibition of not a little petticoat and two substantial boots. Mina and I sat opposite, each in the corner seat near the door, while the remainder of the interior was piled up with baggage of one kind and another.

I had not seen Wilhelm since breakfast that morning. He had told me, with apparent frankness, that he had sent a note to Mina, asking her to meet him at the harbor, provided I had no objection. I made none.

Had he told her of our joint plan—to get her married to him at the earliest moment? Did she know I had engaged myself to provide her with a dowry? And if she knew, what did she think of it? She looked very charming, sitting before me, with long eyelashes shading her downcast eyes. A sudden compunction seized me. She was too good for Wilhelm.

"I hope," I said, "you realize I am trying to act for the best."

"I understand you are obeying your instructions."

"And the princess?"

"The princess leaves herself in my hands. She does not think. I have to think for her. Something had to be

done. The fact is, we are almost without money. There is no reason why I should not tell you the truth."

"If I had not appeared on the scene, what would you have done?"

"I do not know."

"Then," said I, "if things had been left as they were, the princess would perhaps have been obliged to return to her father?"

"She would never have done that."

"What, then?"

"Wilhelm would have arranged something, though I am afraid the poor fellow is not much better off than we are."

"It was a mad scheme of the princess to run away from her home. She ought to be at school—a very strict ladies' school."

"The princess will soon grow old," said Mina, "and adversity is the strictest school, after all."

"That will be her school, if she marries Wilhelm."

Mina moved restlessly. "I trust you will spare me any criticisms of Wilhelm."

"Why do you object to the princess marrying the Duke of Hanau?" I asked.

She opened her eyes in astonishment. "How can you ask that? Because she does not love him."

She had stepped into the trap.

"You think love should always go with marriage?" I continued, with guile.

"Of course."

"Love on both sides?" I would leave no loophole.

"Without doubt."

"Wilhelm does not love the princess," I said, triumphantly. "On your own showing their marriage should be prevented."

She stared at me, and then she burst into a little ripple of laughter. "Whom does he love, then?"

"He loves you."

The scarlet deepened on her cheeks, but the smile did not leave her lips.

"How can you know that?"

"If I had not been told," I went on, "I should have guessed it."

"You are an acute observer."

"I have guessed something more," I said.

"And that is——"

"That you love him."

"I think you guess too much," she said, coldly.

"But do I guess wrongly?"

"I do not know. Honestly, I am not sure."

"Surely your heart tells you?"

"No, my heart is dumb. It is strange to speak to you in this fashion, but, after all, the circumstances are not quite ordinary. If I were sure I loved Wilhelm, I think the difficulties which distress and disturb me would clear away. If I were only sure!"

"Ah, yes, you love him," I said, a little mournfully. "He is very good-looking."

"Suppose I admit all you say about Wilhelm, what then?"

"Then why not marry him?"

"You advise me to do so?"

I gulped down something. "Yes."

"Have you any sisters?" she asked, suddenly.

"No."

"If you had a very dear sister, would you have liked to see her married to Wilhelm?"

I felt a sudden embarrassment. "It would not be a fair test."

"Why not?"

"I don't know."

"But do you know what your answer would be?"

"I should not like a sister of mine to marry him because of his past record and because I distrust him."

"Does that mean a little lurking doubt that peeps out now and again, when he is absent, and dies away utterly when he is present?"

"Well, I do feel like that," I admitted, "though I am not sure his presence entirely removes my distrust. Certainly I realize his personal charm or magnetism, or whatever it ought to be called. But it is not only an indefinable feeling which makes me doubt him. If I judge him adversely, it is on the facts of his past life."

"And yet you want me to marry him?"

"Before I knew you, I thought it would be a good plan if you would marry him—to save the princess," I replied, lamely enough.

"You are willing to jeopardize my future happiness to save the princess?"

"But you love him!" I cried, in desperation. "And he loves you. Surely, in these circumstances——"

She suddenly smiled on me with great sweetness. "Have it your own way, Mr. Chapman. Marry me to whom you please. When can it be arranged?"

"I do not like sarcasm," I said, loftily.

"Nor am I enamored with meddling."

"My duty is to the princess."

"She will be delighted with so stalwart a champion."

"She needs one," I said, bitterly, "for you, whom she trusts, seem indifferent to her reputation."

"No one has ever spoken a word against her reputation," she cried, suddenly aflame.

"Her marriage with Wilhelm would be illegal, and the result must be shame and sorrow to herself and to her—to others."

"That is untrue," she responded, calmly.

"I do not lie."

"No, but you accept the lies of others. The marriage would be perfectly legal in England, and she would remain in England."

"I am no lawyer," I answered. "I only know that in the country of her birth she would be deemed an outcast."

"In your opinion," she said, slowly, "I ought to marry Wilhelm to protect the princess from herself?"

I opened my mouth to speak, but no word came.

"Your silence gives assent," she said. I could only look at her helplessly.

The brake made its way between low-lying hills, with stretches of moor on either side, and past an occasional farmhouse, jogging on at an even pace. On the box, the princess had incited the driver to a seemingly amusing conversation, for his hoarse chuckle broke occasionally on my ear. We rolled on for an hour, until we found ourselves at the

village of Dalavich. It was a quiet little place, with one street and an ivy-covered church, standing peacefully among gravestones.

"These are the nearest habitations to my prison," the princess informed me, over her shoulder. "Isn't that a charming old kirk? I think we might have the marriage there."

"How can you be married there or anywhere, if you are to be locked up in a prison?" I asked.

"Oh, of course, I shall escape," she answered, gravely, "in the dead of night and a dressing gown. Mina, will you go and find the parson and arrange the details? I'll drive on and order tea."

"Would you like to walk in the churchyard?" I asked Mina.

"If you like."

So we entered.

I tried to open the door, but it was locked. Evidently, however, our movements were under observation from one of the windows of the manse adjoining, for in a few minutes a pleasant old gentleman appeared, carrying a bunch of keys.

"You wish to see the interior?" he asked.

"Thank you very much."

"People often come from Oban, and even longer distances, to see the monuments," he said, with pride.

Mina regarded the newcomer with interest. "Are you the minister?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Do you marry people?"

"It is one of my duties. My parish extends for many miles, and most of those you meet hereabouts were baptized here and will be buried here."

"And married here?"

"If they desire it."

"Is it a long process?"

"It takes but a very few minutes," he answered, "but the effect lasts till death."

"I am thinking of getting married," observed Mina, suddenly.

"To this gentleman?" suggested the minister, pleasantly.

"Oh, no." Mina laughed lightly.

"This gentlemen is—is my brother."

"Oh, indeed!" said the minister, a little disappointed. "To some other gentleman?"

"Yes, to another gentleman. I suppose you would marry us if we wanted it."

"Why, yes," said the minister. "I should have to do so, if the proper forms were complied with."

"The proper forms? And what are they?"

"Well," he answered, "certain papers will have to be filled in with the names, and the intention of marriage must be proclaimed from the pulpit on three Sabbaths."

"Could you," asked Mina, "let me have the forms?"

"Certainly."

The good man, evidently not a little astonished, went away on his errand, leaving Mina and myself standing together.

"I—I don't think you should act without the fullest consideration," I quavered.

"Dear Mr. Chapman, don't tell me that a strong, healthy young man like yourself does not know his own mind two minutes running."

"Why," I said, angrily, "do you persistently allude to my health and my youth?"

"They are your two most noticeable attributes."

"I hope you will be happy," I said, coldly.

"I am sure it would distress you to think you had forced me into an unhappy marriage."

"I wash my hands of the whole affair," I said, hotly. "You must not accuse me of forcing you to do anything of the kind."

"Why, you yourself——"

"It was a mere suggestion," I cried.

When the minister came up to us, she thanked him very sweetly, and listened with interest to his explanations.

"I suppose," she observed, "I must wait three weeks. There is no quicker way?"

"Oh, yes, there are quicker ways," said the minister. "Are you in a very great hurry?"

"Personally," said Mina, with a detached air, "I am in no hurry at all. But my brother insists upon it."

"On such a matter, surely your sister should be allowed to follow her own inclinations. Marriage is a solemn business."

"So far as I am concerned," I answered, coldly, "this young lady is free to do what she pleases."

"I have annoyed my dear brother. Perhaps I should not have spoken even to a minister on these private family matters." She sighed. "And, at any rate"—she brightened—"my future husband is called Wilhelm, and I am very fond of the name."

"Wilhelm?" repeated the minister. "Not a foreigner, I hope?"

"Oh, yes, a foreigner," replied Mina; "and I am told his record is not very favorable."

As we walked down the road towards the inn, I preserved a haughty silence. During tea, Mina and the princess chatted freely, but I refused to relax.

"Our policeman," said the princess, "has swallowed a poker."

"I will not let you tease Mr. Chapman," said Mina, severely. "I feel for him."

The princess spluttered with laughter.

"It is time to go," I said, starting up.

"I'll fetch the carriage," cried the princess. "Will you pay the bill, Mr. Policeman?"

"You are not really angry?" asked Mina, glancing at me with a roguish twinkle in her eyes.

"I dislike," I said, ringing the bell, "the female humorist."

CHAPTER XIII.

The shooting lodge was a converted farmhouse. It was a plain, unpretentious two-storied building, with a barn and byre behind it, and stabling for four horses. The caretaker was a middle-aged woman, answering to the name of Annie. She was the widow of a game-keeper who had been shot in the back by a short-sighted cabinet minister, who took him for a stag. The portrait of

the minister hung in the kitchen by the side of that of his victim, and Annie loved to tell the story of the slayer and the slain in an unimpassioned, uninflected monotone which was most wearisome to hear. She spent the best part of her leisure time plodding through the columns of newspapers in search of the name of the individual whose sporting rifle had played its part in her history.

"The Right Honorable James Mac-Cuddie," she would say, in her faded voice, "has made a braw speech at Edinbro' on the Eddication Bill. Ay, but he's an able man!"

We heard the whole story at breakfast time the morning following our arrival. The inquiries of the princess as to the size of the wound, its exact locality, and whether it had bled much, gave great pleasure. Her endeavor to estimate the bore of the rifle from Annie's diagram on the tablecloth caused more than a momentary flicker of joy to pass over the good woman's face.

"It couldn't have been a rifle," declared the princess with conviction, when Annie had left the room. "He must have been fired at with a pom-pom."

I found that the duchess had given Annie minute instructions as to our comfort. From motives of convenience, I decided to adopt Mina's fiction of our relationship, which extended by adding the princess to my family. Mr. Chapman, and the two Misses Chapman, were therefore the occupants of the lodge, and all that remained for me was to make the best of the situation until such time as the count thought fit to relieve me of my family ties.

The princess was the only one of us who seemed from the first to settle down with the utmost content in our new surroundings. Immediately after breakfast on the day following our arrival, she disappeared on a tour of inspection.

I sat down to write a very long letter, describing in many words the appearance both of the princess and of Mina to prevent any possibility of deception on the score of identity, although, as a matter of fact, my suspicions had vanished. Just as I finished, a tap at

the window made me look up, to find the princess peering in at the window. She was standing tiptoe on a flowerpot, inverted on a wheelbarrow. From this dangerous altitude she addressed me.

"I can no longer disguise from you, Mr. Chapman," she said, "that I like you."

"I am very glad to hear it."

"What is your Christian name, Mr. Chapman?"

"Oswald."

"A very pretty name," she answered, graciously. "Will you do something for me, Oswald?"

"Ah," I replied, grimly, "I guessed you wanted something."

"There is such a nice boy digging potatoes down by that cottage," she continued. "He is the son of a gillie, and do you know, he keeps a ferret in a rabbit hutch?"

"And why not?" I asked.

"What is the good of a ferret without a gun?" she queried, eying me sideways. "His father has a gun."

"Lots of people have guns."

"But the silly man won't lend it to me, or any cartridges, or the ferret, or allow his son to help me unless——"

"Unless?"

"Unless you approve."

"Oh, I see."

"I liked you the moment I saw you, Oswald. You have such a nice face. You do approve, don't you?"

I considered. "I hope you won't hurt yourself."

"I knew you were good-natured," she exclaimed, delightedly. "Would you mind shouting, 'All right?'" She indicated a man working outside a cottage standing some hundred yards away. I shouted as desired, and she joined in the shout in the heartiest way possible.

I returned to my letter, which I sealed and addressed. Suddenly I realized I was feeling lonely. I smoked for half an hour, with growing irritation, until a step made me look up. Alas, it was Wilhelm!

"Good-morning," said he.

"Good-morning," I answered. And then, as if by magic, Mina appeared in walking costume.

"Will you come for a walk, Mina?" he asked.

"I was just thinking it is far too fine a morning to waste indoors," she replied.

Why had she not thought so an hour ago?

"Come, then," he said; and they went off together, and I was left alone, a solitary and ill-used mortal.

The hour of our midday meal had been fixed for one o'clock, and I watched the clock with impatience—not that I was hungry, except for social intercourse. My annoyance was beginning to give place to alarm when the princess turned up, glowing with excitement, and bearing with her the stiff corpses of two rabbits.

"I shot them both," she cried, flopping them down on the white tablecloth, from which they were summarily removed by Annie. "Can you cook rabbits, Annie?"

Annie admitted she could.

"I hope you will be very careful with their skins," said the princess, anxiously. "I shall have them stuffed. Oh, Oswald, this is a delightful place! Where's Mina?"

"She is with Wilhelm."

"Oh, he's turned up, has he?" she answered, off-handedly. "Have you ever shot a rabbit?"

"Oh, yes."

"Isn't it splendid to see them go head over heels if you hit 'em fair? I do hate, though, to see them quiver afterwards. That takes away some of the pleasure, doesn't it?"

"Oh, yes," I replied, abstractedly.

"It's not really cruel, though," she explained, hastily. "I have thought it out. Think of a poor rabbit having to die of old age in its burrow. And rabbits must die like that if you don't shoot them."

"I suppose they must."

"And all their relations—their own children even—are so cruel to a rabbit that is ill. Don't you think so?"

"Certainly." I tried to be interested in her conversation. "Did you miss any?"

"Well," she answered, candidly, "I missed most. In fact, I missed all except these two, and Tom had to run

after one of them and hit it with a stick. Tom killed four, but then, of course, he knows his father's gun. He offered to sell me his ferret for ten shillings. I do wish I had ten shillings."

"I can let you have any money you want," I said, quickly.

"How good you are! And may I buy the rabbit hutch as well, and keep the ferret here?"

"If you want to."

"I should like it dearly."

"I wonder where Mina is," I said.

"Oh, with Wilhelm, I suppose."

"Don't you mind?"

"Well, so long as he is engaged to me, I don't see that it matters. I don't believe in engaged people seeing too much of one another." And she disappeared into the kitchen.

I was looking rather furtively through the window, for Mina and Wilhelm had come into sight. They paused at the little wooden gate that led to the entrance. I watched him with hate in my heart. What a lot he had to say to her! Why did she not come in? Lunch was more than half an hour late as it was. It was really very inconsiderate—oh, he was kissing her! I fell into an armchair, in order that I might no longer witness the harrowing spectacle.

In a few minutes Mina appeared, with a glow on her cheeks. I knew what had produced that glow. She smiled cheerfully at me.

"How gloomy you look!" she said.

"Not in the least," I answered. "I am in the highest spirits."

"Really? I have news which will brighten you still more."

"What is it?"

"It is arranged. I have consented. In about three weeks——"

"So soon!" I cried.

"Wilhelm would not stop to lunch," remarked Mina. "He is bicycling back to Oban, and did not want to be late. Besides, he has arrangements to make."

"So soon!"

"It cannot seem soon to you," she answered, petulantly. "I suppose you keep repeating these words like a parrot from some mistaken notion they are complimentary to me."

"God help you!" I said.

"Are you trying to be rude," asked Mina, "or is this your natural manner?"

Our meal was scarcely over before the princess dashed away. Mina and I were left at the table face to face.

"You are not a great conversationalist, are you?" observed Mina. "But I suppose you think a good deal."

"Yes, I am thinking a good deal," I assented.

"The responsibility of your position bears heavily on your young life."

"My young life is older than yours," I responded, tartly.

She rose from her seat, and when she spoke her voice was softer than usual. "I won't tease you again if you will only clear that troubled look from off your face. Don't you see how my worries have taken wings?"

"What has changed you?"

"I have discovered I love Wilhelm," she answered, simply. "I am certain I love him!"

"And you think this should make me want to sing, too?" I said bitterly.

"What a duet we might have!"

"A brother," she whispered, and bent so that I felt her breath on my cheeks, "should rejoice in his sister's happiness."

"A brother," I said, "dreads his sister's unhappiness."

A day or two later the princess insisted on her picnic tea at the top of the hill. Tom carried the basket, the princess bore some cushions, while I followed with the tea kettle.

It was a charming day. The bright sunshine, the light breeze, the heather in bloom, the stretch of landscape, with the range of distant hills fading into blue haze, the loch reflecting the sun and fed by the burn, for all the world like a golden shield with a silver cord, and above all, Mina near me, was surely enough to raise me to that height of bliss, a contented melancholy. We had finished tea, and the princess had disappeared with Tom. Mina and I sat idly watching the sun dipping towards the hills.

"We are a mournful couple, aren't we?" said Mina, breaking the silence.

"You don't look particularly cheerful yourself," I retorted. "But I suppose that is because Wilhelm has not turned up."

"You are quite wrong," she made answer. "I was happy the other day because I had attended the funeral of a little imp of doubt that haunted my brain. I buried him deep, because I was convinced he was dead. To-day —"

"Ah, what has happened to-day?" I cried, sitting up.

"There is a movement in the mold, and I am afraid every moment of seeing his grinning face peeping out."

"You are not sure——" I edged nearer her in my eagerness. "You think that perhaps——"

She turned on me almost fiercely. "I believe it is you who have brought that imp to life. What right have you to take an interest in me? I am nothing to you."

"It was you who gave me the name of brother," I said. "Do I fill the rôle too perfectly?"

"I think any girl might be proud to have you for a brother. How kind and considerate you would be to a sister! And you have none?"

"No, thank God!"

"At the same time," she went on, regarding me with kind eyes, "I think if I had the choice of relationships, I should not become your sister."

"What then?" I asked, full of a preposterous hope.

"I think I should like to be your mother."

I pointed to the figure of a bicyclist down in the valley. "I believe that is Wilhelm."

She looked. "I think you are right." There was no eagerness in her tone. She sighed again. "I suppose we ought to be getting home. It is very pleasant sitting here."

CHAPTER XIV.

The days went by quickly with a charm all their own.

I was in almost daily communication

with the count, and this fact gave me a distinct sense of security. I could not be going far wrong, so long as he knew and sanctioned. In elaborate reports, I detailed to him every incident which could be supposed to have even a slight bearing on the matter in hand. He cordially approved of the purposed marriage between his son and Mina, and the flattering remarks with which he rewarded my efforts in this direction were extremely gratifying. In response to my request, he inclosed a copy of the most recent photograph of the princess, and my doubts, if I had any, were put to rest.

Wilhelm and I always met as good friends. In fact, we four passed our days in amicable fashion, apparently enjoying each other's companionship, although in my case, and in Mina's case, there were moments of gloom and depression, coming quickly, as a fog gathers, and clearing away as suddenly.

By a tacit understanding, Wilhelm and I refrained from discussing the sordid elements of our bargain. But one day we happened to be alone, and I dashed into the subject which was never far from my thoughts.

"I suppose you haven't changed your mind about this marriage?" I said, with a miserable pretense at off-handedness.

"Good gracious, no."

"Is it still a matter of money with you?"

"Oh, yes."

"How much money," I asked, looking away from him, "should you want not to marry Mina?"

"You mean you want me to marry the princess instead?" he asked, regarding me attentively.

"Oh, no, not that," I said, hastily. "Give them both up. Why not? Sign an undertaking promising never to marry the princess, and I will trust you and pay you."

He shook his head. "I would rather give up the five thousand pounds than give up Mina. Don't you realize what love is?"

"You loved her a fortnight ago, and yet it was the princess you talked of marrying," I cried.

"I never intended to marry anyone except Mina," he responded, calmly. "I certainly did intend to frighten my dear father into the payment of a considerable sum of money, but that was only in the way of business."

"Very well, then," I said; "if that is so, why should I pay you anything? On your own admission, the princess is safe."

"Oh, but I have your word of honor, my dear young friend. I can trust that."

"I am not so sure."

"Then poor Mina must rough it, for I am going to marry her, although you refuse to give me a penny."

I felt suddenly chilled. Without appearing in earnest, he impressed me with his intense earnestness.

"How many days yet?" I asked, miserably.

"Only five. I trust you will be present at our very modest nuptials."

"Certainly not," I cried, distressed at the notion.

"Well, well," said he, "I must perforce do without a best man."

We were sitting together in front of the lodge on the edge of the moorland which ran almost up to our door. It was Mina's favorite spot for tea, and a little rustic table was already spread with tea things. At that moment Annie came out of the front door with a steaming earthenware teapot, and Mina strolled towards us across the heather. I rose, anxious to get away, for my nerves were all on end.

"Tea, Oswald?" asked Mina.

"No, thanks," I answered, shortly.

Mina paused with the teapot in her hand. "Oswald," she said, "don't stare so stoutly at the distant horizon. Don't you see that Annie is making cabalistic signs in your direction? She evidently wants to attract your attention without our observing it."

"Mebbe I can have a word with you, sir," said Annie, in some slight confusion.

"What is it, Annie?"

"A visitor, sir."

"I will come, Annie," I said, and went with her towards the lodge. We were

hardly beyond hearing distance when she turned to me with the eager joy of one who has amazing news to impart.

"The duchess!" said she.

"What?"

"Her grace and none other."

I hastened into the parlor, and there found, sure enough, the massive form of my grandmother. She was looking out of the window; and when I entered she turned and inclosed me in her suffocating embrace.

"This is a surprise indeed," I said, repressing a tendency to gasp for breath.

"A mutual surprise," she answered, "for I expected to find you resisting murderous attacks from without and hysterical appeals from within. Instead of which, you seem to be giving little tea parties on the heather."

She had turned from me, and was gazing with more than slight curiosity at the figures of Mina and Wilhelm. He was bending over her in a very love-like attitude.

"That is the princess, I suppose," she observed; "but who——"

"Oh, dear no," I interposed, hastily.

"That is the princess' companion—an English governess."

"Oh, indeed. And who is that good-looking, though, to my mind, unprepossessing young man?"

"Oh, that—that is the count's son."

She turned quickly and her face cleared. "The count's son? I had no idea the count had sent you reinforcements. I am relieved to hear it. I might have guessed he would not have left you to struggle alone. I suppose these two are the custodians of the princess? A most sensible arrangement. But where is the princess?"

"Oh, about somewhere."

"You don't find it necessary to keep her under very strict watch?"

"Oh, no."

"Is she quite safe from the advances of the adventurer?"

"Oh, yes."

"He is not forcing himself on her, then?"

"Oh, no."

"That's good. Things seem to be going very pleasantly. I feared you

might be having trouble, and so I thought I would pay you a visit. I heard from the count the other day, and he complained you did not give him very full information."

"Why, hang it," I exclaimed, feeling wronged, "I tell him everything—though, indeed, there is not much to tell."

"It is curious he never mentioned his son was with you."

"It's very kind of you to come so far," I said after a pause, which I found embarrassing. "I had no notion——"

"You have heard of the duke's illness?"

"Which duke? There seem so many," I added, apologetically.

"I mean my son. He has had a collapse, and the doctors advised a yachting cruise. Of course, a mother's place is by her son's side—even on the sea—if it isn't rough, anyhow. We touched at Oban, and I determined to run over and see you. I was not a little anxious about you, Oswald."

"There is really no cause," I said.

"So I perceive, and I am glad. As a matter of fact, I intended to suggest that you and the princess should join us on the yacht. Is it practicable?"

"There is Mina—Miss Dobson, I mean."

"That nice-looking girl? Mina! Oho!" She looked at me with keenly searching eyes.

"She is engaged to Wilhelm," I said, hastily, reddening as usual.

"I suppose by Wilhelm you mean the count's son. A good job, too. I feared that perhaps——" She did not finish her sentence. "I don't want you to marry a governess, Oswald," she went on. "Perhaps we can do better for you than that later on. I'll see to your matrimonial ventures."

"Thank you very much."

"I did not anticipate you were such a large party," the duchess continued, "and I cannot extend a general invitation without speaking to the steward. Our accommodation is not very great. But I'll see."

"Oh, please don't bother," I said, quickly. "I am afraid it is quite im-

possible, though, of course, it would have been delightful. You see, Mina and Wilhelm are getting married shortly, and—and it would upset their plans."

The duchess was not greatly interested in the love affairs of the count's son, and an unknown governess. "I should like to see the princess," she remarked.

"I am afraid she is not in," I said, apologetically. "She went off early this morning, and she hasn't turned up."

"Alone?"

"Young Tom, the gillie's son, is with her, I think."

She stared at me. "You all seem remarkably remiss. How do you know she is not philandering with this German adventurer?"

"There is no fear of that," I answered, with a superior smile.

"I do hope you are not being deceived," said the duchess, earnestly. "There is something queer about this."

"You need have no alarm. I take full responsibility," I replied, grandly.

"Well, I won't meddle. The count's son, his fiancée and yourself ought to be able to look after one young woman. By the way, you haven't fallen in love with her?"

I laughed. "Oh, no, you would not ask that question if you knew her."

"What, is she unattractive?"

"Oh, no, she's a very nice girl, but I can't imagine anyone falling in love with her. She's quite young."

"Youth in the female is not usually a barrier in love."

"Oh, but she's only a tomboy—a regular hoyden, and yet rather nice—so frank and open."

"I should like to see her. I must try and come over again."

"Won't you have some tea? If you care to come outside——"

"No, no. I must be getting back."

I did not press the point, for I was not anxious to introduce Wilhelm to her.

"I hope the count will soon be able to get back," I said, "and then I shall be free of this business."

"I hear the grand duke is still in a very critical state, but there is hope."

"I am glad of that."

"Good-by, Oswald. Oh, by the way, I have been looking through your mother's papers. It is very curious——" She stopped suddenly.

"What is curious?" I asked.

She looked at me searchingly. "Did your mother ever hint that——"

"What?"

"Well, never mind." She paused for a moment. "Is there nothing she said which dwells in your thoughts—nothing you are continually pondering over and wondering at? Tell me frankly, Oswald."

"Why, no," I answered, in bewilderment.

She seemed disappointed, and at the same time relieved. "There are allusions in some of my son's letters I cannot understand. I have sent the letters to Mr. Parsons. I dare say they mean nothing, but I am glad I did not burn them."

"Allusions to what?" I asked with some curiosity.

"I will tell you another time." She embraced me. "Good-by again. Be a good lad."

I saw her to her conveyance, and then went to find the coachman. Shortly afterwards Wilhelm took his departure, and Mina and I watched him disappear on his bicycle down the road the duchess had taken half an hour before.

Suddenly Mina clutched my arm. "Oh, Oswald," she cried, and I thought there was something like terror in her voice—"there is less than one week more!"

Terror? I knew I must be wrong. I had mistaken ecstasy for fear. I looked at the sky.

"I trust you will have a fine day for the ceremony," I said, stiffly.

Mina dropped my arm and went silently into the house.

CHAPTER XV.

The days slipped quickly by. Mina made several journeys to Oban, and many parcels were delivered at the lodge.

She was to be married on the follow-

ing Thursday morning. It had been arranged that Wilhelm should call for her at eleven in the morning, and drive her to Dalavich. As soon as the ceremony was concluded, he was to return to the lodge to obtain the promised reward, in the form of a check, handing me in exchange the certificate of marriage. She would go to Oban, and await his return. I was grateful that I was to be spared the pain of seeing her again as Wilhelm's wife.

"But what about the princess?" I asked Wilhelm, when he informed me of these arrangements. "Who is to tell her?"

"As I shall be pressed for time, I thought perhaps you would kindly do so."

I shrank from the ordeal. "I am afraid there will be an unpleasant scene," I said.

"Bless me, why should there be?" Wilhelm asked.

I was astonished. "She has every right to consider herself betrayed, hasn't she? One can hardly expect her to take the news quietly."

He laughed. "Dobbs won't care a couple of pins."

"Not care!" I cried.

"Her remarkable fund of sterling common sense will come to her aid," he said, more gravely.

I said no more, but I felt sorely puzzled. Apart from the princess' indifference to Wilhelm's want of attention, what greatly surprised me was Mina's callousness. I found myself following her movements with a sorrowful perplexity, which, no doubt, mirrored itself on my face.

"Don't!" cried Mina to me one day, when we happened to be alone.

"Don't what?"

"Don't say nothing and look everything. Do you know you are beginning to distress me?"

"I am sure I am very sorry," I murmured.

"Honestly, what do you think of my conduct?" she asked, without turning.

"I try not to think of it."

She laughed in a way that jarred. "I know you despise me. I hate to be

despised. I hate to think you despise me."

"You have done nothing wrong," I said, hotly. "You are doing right. You are protecting the princess from herself."

"And you are trying to find excuses for me." She glanced towards me, and her eyes were wonderfully soft and tender. "Ah, Oswald, when you know everything, what will you say?"

"What do you mean? What is it I do not know?"

"I am not marrying Wilhelm to protect Dobbs."

"You mean," I said, with a jealous pang, "you are marrying him because you love him?"

She sighed. "I sometimes fear I haven't even that excuse. Sometimes I think I am marrying him because I am a strong-willed, obstinate woman, who cannot bear to depart from a course she has decided upon."

"Do you mean you have always aimed at this—this conquest?" I asked with scorn.

"It seems the only way," she answered wearily, "the only escape from irksomeness, from restrictions, from narrowness. I think that is why I have decided upon it."

"Your reasons are monstrous," I cried.

She did not appear to hear me. "And now that I am pledged," she went on, "I must go on, and the future must take care of itself."

I tried to feel disgusted, but somehow I could not. I felt this frank confession should alienate me, but it did not. And soon I was engaged in my favorite pastime of spinning excuses for her.

On Wednesday evening, the day before her marriage day, I decided to make one last appeal. I persuaded myself it was my duty to do so.

The whole of that Wednesday, Wilhelm had been with us. At last, after supper, he had started homeward, and Mina had volunteered to accompany him a little way on his road. Here at length was my chance. When they had been gone some time, I went down the road slowly in order to meet Mina as

she came back. Twilight had settled on the moorlands—a twilight that never deepened into darkness during these short summer nights. I walked cautiously, for I did not want to meet Mina till Wilhelm was well on his road.

At length I found her. She was sitting on a boulder by the wayside, her face bent forward and hidden in her hands. She was alone, and her attitude denoted utter sadness. I was glad to see her in this mood, for it indicated that she realized the seriousness of her position.

She did not hear me till I had come close to her, and had touched her gently on the shoulder. She had flung a shawl over her head when she had gone out, and it had fallen off. I picked it up.

"You will catch cold," I said.

"Is it you, Oswald? I thought it was Wilhelm who had come back. You startled me."

"I came out to meet you. The road is so lonely."

"Thank you." She made no movement to rise.

"Besides, I have something to say to you."

"Please don't say it."

I was offended. "What do you mean?" I said, huffily.

She smiled. "I have noticed all day you have been working yourself up to a final appeal. Your face reflects every thought. Dear Oswald, how I wish you had that fine tact which obviates useless effort!"

I was considerably taken aback. "Nevertheless, I must say what I have to say," I responded at length.

She shook her head in a forlorn kind of way. "Have you ever studied my face?"

"I have sometimes glanced at it," I answered, doing more than that at the moment, for her clear-cut profile showed like a fine cameo against the darkening moors.

"My chin, Oswald! What do you deduce from that? Ah, if you would only study my chin, how many unpleasant conversations we might avoid!"

I was at a loss. "I hope you are not being funny," I returned, in an ag-

grieved voice. "You know my views on young girls who strive after facetiousness."

"I am not joking."

"I don't observe anything remarkable about your chin," I said. "Certainly nothing which would prevent me speaking to you as a man of the world should speak to a young, inexperienced girl, without a mother, in a position of considerable difficulty, who contemplates a step which must lead her to lifelong unhappiness." I took breath after this long sentence, and felt I was doing very well. How sweet she looked in the deepening twilight! Oh, Mina, Mina, I love you!

"Dear lad," said she, "how I wish I were your mother! I have said that before, I know, but the thought comes to me every time you speak."

"I do not intend to allow myself to be annoyed by anything you say, however offensive," I replied, crossly.

"I did not mean to say anything offensive."

"It is offensive to continually reiterate that you want to be my mother," I cried, with sudden heat.

"Ah, don't let us quarrel," she made answer. "It is my last night here."

"Your last night! Ah, Mina——"

"Don't spoil it," she cried, almost passionately. "Let us forget everything horrible."

"Your marriage is horrible! You admit it!"

"I admit nothing," she answered, in haste.

"You don't love him, Mina. Perhaps he may ill-treat you."

"No man will ever dare to ill-treat me." There was a sudden flash in her eyes.

"Give him up, Mina."

"Not another word, Oswald." There was something in her tone that made me pause.

"Tell me why not. Only tell me why not," I pleaded, conscious of a nervous tremor in my voice. This was not the kind of interview I had planned.

She seemed to ponder my question. "Because," she replied, at length, "be-

cause I have nowhere to go except to him."

"Have you no home?"

"Ah, no, it is closed against me. It is Wilhelm or solitariness. And I fear solitude."

"Then come to me." I did not mean to say these words, but they came from me almost without my consent. "Mina, Mina, I love you dearly. If you marry him, you will break my heart. Come to me, Mina, for I love you."

"Hush, hush," she breathed.

I sank by her side and seized her hands.

"Dearest, look at me. Why do you keep your dear eyes turned away? Ah, Mina, how I have longed to tell you this."

"Let go my hands, Oswald, dear."

"Can you love me? Ah, that's impossible, I know. But don't marry a man you don't love. Let me have my chance of winning you. Perhaps in time you might learn to love me. But give up this horrible marriage. If only for my sake, give it up. It frightens and distresses me. I can't bear to think of it. Mina, dearest——"

"Please let go my hands."

I let go one and held the other. She sat still and gazed into the dimness.

"I can't tell in words how I love you, Mina. I can't say what I want to say. But I want to devote myself to you for all my life. I want to take care of you, and keep pain and sorrow at bay for you. Ah, let me do that, Mina. Don't tear yourself away from me, and go where I may not follow you, into a world of suffering and distress, perhaps even of ignominy. Don't think I am asking too much. I won't ask you to love me; I will only ask to be allowed to love you, and to protect you. Don't take that right from me."

She drew away her hand.

"I am sorry for you, Oswald," she said, softly. "I guessed in a way you rather—liked me. But I never—oh, Oswald, how could you be so silly?" There was a tender maternal solicitude in her tone. "However, you will get over it very quickly. You mustn't let it hurt you. Believe me, I am not worthy

of your love. Your honest heart would turn away in sorrow and surprise if you knew everything. Dear, dear Oswald, how sorry I am!"

"You don't care for me?"

"Yes, I do. I think I love you."

My heart leaped. My arms went out, but she evaded them.

"Mina! Mina!"

"Not in that way. As a sister. Ah, not perhaps quite as a sister. As a mother——" My arms dropped to my sides. "Well, not perhaps quite as a mother. But not as you wish. Besides, it is impossible, so utterly impossible, that if you only knew you would laugh. Oh, no, you would not laugh, but you would not marry me."

"Nothing would prevent me doing that, if you would only consent."

"How I wish this had never happened! Come, Oswald, take me home."

But I remained with my head on the stone which had supported her, feeling that the world had no more interest for me. She hesitated a moment, and I heard her sigh. Then she turned and went back alone.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Mina wants her breakfast in her own room," said the princess the next morning. "She has a headache. You don't look particularly chirpy yourself. But this place suits me, and Annie makes splendid porridge. Please pass the sugar."

I did as she requested.

"Annie says that a real Scot would rather die than take sugar with his porridge. Her husband never did. He used to take salt. I think that was horrid of him."

"Perhaps it was as well he was shot," I said, trying to be flippant.

"Oh, by the way, that MacCuddie man is making a speech on Army Reform in Oban to-day. Annie is greatly excited; I told her she might go if she liked, and that I would look after the house for her. I feel sure I can cook." She pondered a little. "Of course, I have never tried."

It was a moment or so before I realized the significance of what she was saying.

"She can't go," I said, briefly.

"I told her she might."

"You had no right to tell her that,"

"Well, she asked me to ask you, and I said I would fix it up for her. Do let the poor thing go and listen to her husband's murderer on Army Reform. I am sure he is qualified to speak on musketry practice."

"No, no, quite impossible." I could not explain that Annie would be wanted at home to chaperon the princess that night.

"Well, well," said the princess, resignedly, "I shall have to explain to her that you are a cruel and harsh man, even although you are my brother. If I were a man, I could not listen unmoved to the pleading of a gentle little sister."

"What are you going to do to-day?" I asked.

"Loch Burn," she replied. "I shall work down towards the loch. I suppose I can't induce you to come with me?"

"No, I'm afraid not." I glanced at my watch. It was nearly ten o'clock.

"Wilhelm is driving Mina over to Oban, isn't he?" asked the princess. "If you see Mina before she starts you might ask her to bring me back some tooth powder."

Should I tell the princess Mina was not coming back? Supposing I was to tell her Mina's true errand, what would be the result? Could the princess stop this accursed marriage? I hesitated, and for a single moment determined to try the experiment. But I gave up the notion. What right had I to betray Mina?

"Oh, I nearly forgot!" cried the princess, suddenly. "Mina asked me to make her a bouquet. Come and help me, Oswald."

I think there is a subtle joy in lacerating one's own heart. At any rate, I followed the princess out into the little patch of garden. For some time I watched Dobbs moodily. She arranged the flowers tastelessly, seeming so entirely to lack the feminine gift of color,

that I felt constrained to take them from her and sort them myself.

"That's very pretty," said Dobbs, critically, with her head on one side. "I am an awful duffer at anything like that."

"It is odd," I said. "Most women have an instinctive gift for that sort of thing."

"Well, I haven't," she answered, shortly.

"I sometimes think you were intended for a boy," I observed.

She glanced at me quickly, reddening slightly. "I wish I was," she said almost defiantly. "If you only knew what a nuisance long dresses are." She kicked at hers impatiently. "Will you give Mina the flowers? I want to be off."

"Certainly not," I cried, as if I had been stung. "Take them, please."

I left her and went back to the house. While Mina was still there, I felt I could not leave it for long. I heard her step on the stairs, and then the parlor door opened and she entered.

"I did not know you were here," she said, and flushed. She was dressed in a plain white dress, and her hat matched her dress. She seemed very sweet and gentle. "And yet I am glad I have found you. I should not have liked to have gone without saying good-by. You have been very kind to Dobbs and myself."

"I would rather not have spoken to you again," I said. I was annoyed with myself because my voice was hoarse. "It would have been—less painful."

The tears rose to her eyes. "I can't bear to feel that I am leaving you with pain in your heart."

"I can bear it," I answered. "You need have no compassion for me."

"Ah, yes, you will soon forget me." She held out her hand. "Good-by, Oswald."

I took her hand. "Good-by, Mina."

"Wilhelm has come. I must go."

I raised her hand to my lips. "May God protect you," I said, brokenly.

At the door she turned suddenly. "Oswald, Oswald, it hurts me to leave you like this," she cried, almost wildly.

"I wish things were different. I wish—I wish—I had the right to stay and comfort you. Ah, I ought not to say that. I only mean that I wish you were really my brother."

"If you were indeed my sister," I said, grimly, "I would keep you away from that man, by force, if necessary."

Through the window, I saw Wilhelm greet her; I saw her refuse his aid, and step unassisted into the dogcart. Dobbs flung the bunch of flowers into her lap. Wilhelm picked up the reins and they drove away. I flung myself into a chair and covered my face with my hands.

I sat plunged into the completest misery for over an hour, and then I roused myself, full of the resolve to get rid of the entanglements of this unhappy business.

The sun was shining brilliantly. The whole world seemed in holiday mood. I passed Annie, who looked at me reproachfully, and her eyes were red.

As I wandered down the road past the scene of my last night's interview with Mina, I hardly noticed a trap passing me, although a vehicle on the moorland road was not common; but I heard my name. I raised my head to find it was the postman who was addressing me.

"I've a letter for you, Mr. Chapman," said he. "Your friend didn't call this morning as usual, so I've just brought it myself."

"What friend?" I asked.

"The dark gentleman with the bicycle." He was fumbling in his bag.

"Did he call for my letters?"

"Every morning. You see, we don't deliver till late in the day, and he said you would like your letters as early as possible."

I took the letter he handed me, and thanked him. It was news to me that Wilhelm called daily for my letters. I had found them on the breakfast table, and it had never occurred to me to inquire how they came there. The knowledge that Wilhelm had concerned himself so kindly on my behalf caused me to feel uneasy.

I sat down by the roadside and opened

the letter, which bore a German stamp and the Cassel postmark.

"Dear Oswald," it began, "I am greatly pleased with the bold and skillful way you are encountering the difficulties that beset you. It is true the accident to Wilhelm has greatly assisted you"—what accident?—"but Providence is usually on the side of those that help themselves. A compound fracture ought to give him his quietus, at any rate until I can be with you. It was a master stroke on your part not to have informed the princess, and to leave her to wonder at his remissness. But are you sure he will not get some one to carry a message? Remember, he is as crafty as the devil, or his father."

This was Greek to me. I turned to the signature to find it was the count's. But the writing was entirely different from that of all the other letters I had received from him.

"You will forgive my fear, shown perhaps too clearly in my last letter, that the accident might have been a carefully contrived scheme to throw you off your guard. But your assurance in answer that you yourself were present when the leg was put into splints, and that the doctor is an acquaintance of your own, has removed my apprehensions. I am not, therefore, hurrying to Scotland as was at one time my intention. You will see, will you not, that Wilhelm gets skilled attention? I should not like him to be lamed for life. You will wonder at my solicitude, but paternal affection dies hard."

What did all this mean? Astonishment began to give way to consternation.

"The grand duke is still in a critical state, although I am beginning to hope. He is anxious to have his son here. You must arrange to send the lad over. I realize the awkwardness of leaving the princess alone with you, but what is to be done? The boy must be here. I feel sure, when you tell him of his father's anxiety to see him and of his father's dangerous state, he will come readily, for he is a well conditioned boy. Perhaps you may be able to induce the princess to accompany him. You may give her my assurance that no com-

pulsion will be placed upon her—as far, at any rate, as her marriage with the Duke of Hanau is concerned. Between ourselves, the duke declines to marry her after what has occurred. Telegraph me when to expect Carl.”

And then followed the count's signature.

For some minutes I sat absolutely dazed. What did it mean? Had I been deceived, after all?

“Annie, Annie!” I shouted.

She came out of the house in a hurry, potato skins dropping from her apron.

“What is it?” she cried. “Has anyone been shot?”

“Who posted my letters?”

“Your letters? Dugald McCree takes them to the post office at Dalavich.”

“Did you give them to him yourself?”

“No; the young leddy, Miss Dobbs, would always take them to Dugald.”

I turned giddy.

Was it too late to save the princess? I glanced at my watch. The marriage was to have taken place at twelve, and it was now long past that hour. Too late! Too late!

And yet, perhaps, I was wrong. The princess had said she was going to fish in the loch. I could solve the question that way. The loch was not more than a mile away. I turned and ran.

CHAPTER XVII.

The loch rippled clear and blue at my feet, but I could see no princess. The clouds cast their shadows on its surface, but there was no young lady angling in its depths. I felt sick and giddy. Heavens, what a fool I had been!

The whole world seemed to rock with derisive laughter and jeers. The rabbits mocked me before they doubled for their burrows. The flies that circled round my head buzzed with contemptuous amazement. There were nasty leers on the faces of the hillside sheep, and the sun itself, as it ducked in and out of the clouds, pitied me and wondered at my extreme simplicity.

Wait a minute. Was there not one gleam of gladness in my gloom? I had discovered the truth before I had parted with the money. Ah, ha, Wilhelm, my fine fellow, there is now no five thousand pounds for you, nor will there be. You and the princess may go through a form of marriage if you please, but you'll have to starve for all that. You'll have to crawl on all fours to the count, or earn your own living. Which will you prefer?

Slightly comforted, I sat up on the bed of heather on which I had flung myself, and my eyes fell on a human being. Glancing across the loch, I saw standing on a little rocky island some distance from the shore, silhouetted against the purple of the distant hills, the naked figure of a slim lad. He had evidently chambered out of the water with the intention of diving off. It was probably a shepherd laddie enjoying a morning dip. I watched him idly for a few minutes, and then determining that I would return to the lodge to have it out with Wilhelm, I rose quickly.

The boy had evidently not noticed me before, for after a startled moment he plunged in apparent confusion into the water. As I turned away, I smiled at his modesty.

I had not taken more than a few steps when I stumbled over a little heap of clothing. It was with something of a shock I observed that it was composed of feminine articles of attire. I glanced round with some timidity. Certainly the bather I had observed could not have been the owner of these clothes, and there was no one else in sight.

I looked onwards. I could see the lad's head, bobbing round the corner of the rock, watching my movements. I looked at the garments at my feet. The color of the dress attracted my attention. Somewhere or other I had seen that color before. I looked at the dress carefully. By all that was inexplicable, it was the dress the princess had worn that morning!

I went to the edge of the loch and shouted to the lad. He took no notice, keeping out of my sight, though I saw his head bob round the corner of the

island more than once. I ordered him to come ashore, but he ignored my command, always keeping the island between him and me when I ran round the edge of the loch. I was determined to solve the mystery before leaving the spot, and so I returned to the clothing, and sitting down in front of it, waited developments.

The boy seemed to realize it was to be a trial of patience, and, probably finding the water chilly, he climbed on to the rock and lay there basking in the sun, evidently with the intention of tiring me out. Across the water, I beckoned him to come to me. I shouted I would not hurt him. He took no notice, except, by way of answer to my expostulations, to raise his fingers to his nose and spread them in vulgar fashion.

This was too much. My patience was exhausted, and I was certain no young woman was sheltering on or behind the rock. I began to undress. This new move evidently caused the young gentleman some mental perturbation. When I plunged into the water and struck out for him, he rose and seemed to hesitate whether to flee or to surrender. However, when I reached the island, he was still there.

"All right, Oswald," he said, in a conciliatory tone, "I'll come. You've fairly copped me."

"Who the blazes are you?" I asked, raising myself out of the water.

"I'm—I'm Carl."

"And the princess—where—who is the princess?"

He fidgeted. "Shall we go ashore?" said he. "We can talk better there."

"You must tell me who and where the princess is," I ordered. "Tell me at once, and no nonsense."

"I shall tell you nothing," he answered, doggedly, "though I think most intelligent people would have guessed long ago."

"Do not be impertinent," I retorted, with as much dignity as I could muster. "When you were a princess you could say things which in a mere boy are not permissible."

"Shall we go on shore?" he asked, meekly.

"When you have told me everything."

"I refuse to say anything till I am dressed."

"In woman's clothes?" I asked, with scorn.

He flushed. "I swear I shall never put on these beastly rags again. But, Oswald, do let us get on shore. The flies are worrying me horribly."

"When you have told me everything."

"Never."

"You must."

"I shan't. And I am going on shore."

"Very well," I said, grimly. "But let me tell you that there is a walking stick there of a very pliable nature."

"You forget that I am the hereditary grand duke," he said, with hauteur.

"I remember you are no longer a princess," I replied, with determination.

He capitulated suddenly. "Mina is the princess," he said.

"Oh, indeed," said I, blankly. Though I had begun to guess it, the certain knowledge came nevertheless as a shock.

"Now," said he, "shall we be getting ashore?"

"I suppose so." So we swam back to the mainland in company.

"I hope you are not vexed?" he asked.

I laughed, without much mirth. "No doubt it appears an excellent joke to you."

Carl looked at me anxiously and yet triumphantly. "By this time Mina will be married. You can't do anything, you know. Why not make the best of it?"

"Why not, indeed," I replied, moodily.

"It was not your fault. You couldn't have been expected to guess," he said, soothingly.

"You think so?" I asked, ironically, not feeling comforted in the least. Never was the son of a grand duke in such imminent peril of personal castigation.

"On the whole, you did very well," he said, patronizingly.

I glared at him fiercely. "I advise you not to say another word until I give you leave. Put on your woman's clothes this instant. And let me tell you, Wilhelm has made a pretty muddle

of his scheme, for I haven't paid him the money he expects, and don't intend to."

His face fell. "I am afraid Wilhelm will be annoyed."

"I don't suppose he will be pleased."

"You'll let him have some money, won't you? He's frightfully hard up."

"I'll see him damned first," I cried, vindictively.

"I ought not to have gone for a swim," he said, penitently; "but the water did look so ripping, and I was sick of these things. The wig in particular is so hot and stuffy."

"What put that disguise into your head?"

"It was Wilhelm's notion originally. He suggested it first in order to help our escape from Cassel. Mina was dressed up as an old woman. That is how we got away so easily. When Wilhelm found the count could not come to Oban, he wired me to put on this rig again. We did not know his reason until he explained it to us later."

"The reason being to deceive me." By this time I was clothed. "Dress quickly, and come along."

He shook his head. "What's the good? You know the truth now."

"Look here, my lad," I said, "you can't traipse about the Highlands in that attire. Besides, you must start for Germany without a moment's delay. Your father is critically ill, and your absence is distressing him."

"Is that true?" he asked, and his face paled.

"Yes, it is true. Did not Wilhelm tell you?"

"No." The news seemed to sober him. "If my father is ill, I must go to him at once."

"That is obvious."

"You know, don't you, I am his only son?"

"Yes."

He rose to his feet. "I will never wear these clothes again. They are—unworthy."

He made a bundle of them round a heavy stone and flung them into the lake. "And now," he said, "I am ready to go back to Germany."

"Do you propose to travel clad in a

garment which I believe those who know call a chemise?" I asked, sarcastically.

"You must go to the lodge and fetch my clothes," he answered. "You will find them in a bag in my room."

I looked at my watch. "Is there anything else you will want? You will not have time to go back to the lodge yourself, if you are to catch the afternoon express from Oban."

He thought. "No, everything is in my bag."

"I shall be back in half an hour," I said.

I hurried away, leaving him standing among the heather, his white garment flapping about his legs in the breeze. When I got to the lodge, I found the bag without difficulty. As I was hastening out of the house, carrying it in my hand, I encountered Annie.

"Has Mr. Wilhelm got back yet?" I asked.

"No, sir." Her reproachful glance reminded me I was doing her a grievous wrong.

"Oh, by the way, Annie," I said, stopping, "I understand you want to go to Oban this afternoon."

"And that did I, sir. But it matters little what I want."

"You may go," I said, shortly. "I find Miss Mina and Miss Dobbs will not be staying here to-night. There is no objection to your going to Oban."

"I'm much obliged to you, sir."

I hurried off, for my thoughts were with the heir to a European sovereignty, cooling in inadequate garb, on the breezy shores of a Highland loch.

When I got back to him, he greeted me with some impatience.

"What a time you've been! How heather does tickle!"

When he had finished his toilet, I was amazed at the transformation clothes could effect. As a princess, he had appeared as a pleasant-faced, awkward girl. In his own garments, he was a good-looking, slim lad of rather less than medium height. I congratulated him on the change, and he flushed uncomfortably.

We had set out for the main road, with the intention of walking to Dalavich. Luckily, we met the postman on his homeward journey, and I easily arranged for the conveyance of Carl to Oban. I supplied him with ample funds for his journey.

"Good-by, Dobbs," I said. "Take care of yourself."

"Right you are," he answered, from his seat by the postman. "And, Oswald, just one word. Don't be hard on Wilhelm—for Mina's sake."

CHAPTER XVIII.

I went towards the lodge slowly and sadly, taking a short cut over the heather. As I went, I pieced out in my mind all the parts of the fraud which had gone to my deception, and I could find no excuse for myself. My credulity had been enormous. Was ever such a fool as I? Youth has its ups and downs; and I was in the downs. My soul dragged behind me in the dust.

I walked with my eyes bent on the ground, and had almost reached the lodge before I noticed that a female figure was leaning over the swinging gate. The sun was in my eyes, but surely I could not be mistaken. The blood surged to my head. I stopped short, and stared. What had brought Mina back? Ah, Wilhelm had sent her for the check! Perhaps he had found out that I knew everything, and trusted to her pleading. My face grew hard, and I came forward slowly.

"Well, Oswald, I'm back again," she said.

"I did not know you intended to come back. I thought Wilhelm——"

Her face was pale and thoughtful. "I did not intend to come back, but I could do nothing else."

"What do you mean? Where is Wilhelm?"

She plucked a sprig of honeysuckle and smelt it. "He is looking for a minister," she observed, examining the flower very closely.

"A minister! Aren't you—aren't you——"

"No, I'm not," she answered, with more than a suspicion of tartness.

"But why aren't you married?"

She hesitated a moment. "I suppose you will laugh, and I shall hate you if you do. The minister at Dalavich, who was going to marry us, has got the measles. They came on suddenly, and they're very bad. Can you imagine any thing so absurd? Wilhelm started off to Kintrau on his bicycle, but the minister was away from home. He went on to Kitmelfort, but the minister there had two funerals on hand which he declined to postpone. I think that was so unreasonable of him, as if funerals could possibly matter! Wilhelm has now gone on to Oban to arrange for us to be married to-morrow morning."

I stared at her without speaking for some moments. "You're not married!" I repeated, slowly and with difficulty.

"No." She gazed at the distant horizon.

I took off my cap. "Thank God."

For a single instant her eyes met mine, and the blood crept slowly over her face. "The reprieve is not a long one," she said, in a low voice.

"Who can say how long?"

"Only till to-morrow."

"Only till to-morrow!" I echoed.

She looked at me a little strangely, and then turned and went into the house. I followed her.

"Where is Annie?" she asked.

I told her. She glanced at the clock. "Four o'clock! Isn't Dobbs back yet? Who gave you your lunch?"

"I haven't had any lunch. I didn't want any."

"I haven't had any, either," she observed. "Shall we have high tea? I am very hungry."

Again our eyes met, and for some reason we averted them in confusion.

"You go outside and smoke," she said, with a pretense of lightness. "Men are terribly in the way when meals have to be got ready."

"Well," I said, "I want to go down to McCree's cottage."

"Well, don't be long. I've only got to boil the kettle."

At the cottage I found only Tommy.

"Where's your father?"

"He's awa'."

"Where?"

"In the toon."

"What town?"

"Oban."

"Look here, Tommy, I've a telegram I want to send off at once. What's the nearest telegraph office?"

"At Dalavich."

"That's five miles. How can you get there?"

"I can wauk."

"Yes, but what time does the office close?"

"Five o'clock."

I glanced at my watch and groaned. "You can't do it in the time. Where's the pony?"

"Faither's driving the trap."

"Confound it!" Just at that moment I saw Wilhelm dismounting from his bicycle at the door of the lodge. A sudden inspiration possessed me.

"Tommy," I said, "can you bicycle?"

He grinned. "That can I."

"You are really a very good boy!" I exclaimed, with strong approval. "Do you know where Mr. Wilhelm puts his bicycle? Of course you do. In the stable behind the house. When we're at tea, just borrow it. Make as little noise as you can, because he mightn't like to lend it to you. Some people are so unreasonable. You'll be back in less than an hour, and he'll never know. Now understand, my telegram must be sent off before five o'clock."

When I returned to the lodge, I found Wilhelm and Mina already at their meal. She seemed a little downcast. Wilhelm greeted me with his usual pleasant smile.

"What a day I have had!" he observed. "It's a positive scandal that parsons are so scarce in a Christian country. I shall really have to write to the *British Weekly*."

"Did you find one, after all?" I asked.

"Oh, yes; I tracked one to his lair. He is to give us his services to-morrow at twelve. Mina, I shall be here at ten sharp!"

"I shall be ready," she answered, a trifle wearily. There was no animation on her face. He eyed her keenly.

"What cursed luck we've had. I wish we could have got the business through to-day."

"Yes, indeed," she indorsed, with a sigh.

"It can't be helped."

"No, it can't be helped."

Conversation flagged. We finished the meal in almost absolute silence. Then Mina rose and went out of doors, sitting down in her favorite spot on the other side of the briar hedge on the edge of the moor. Wilhelm followed her, and so did I, for I was determined not to let her out of my sight.

"I shall always have pleasant memories of this place," Mina said, dreamily, and with a glance in my direction. "On the whole, time has passed very agreeably."

Wilhelm smiled. "For my part," he said, "I shall be delighted to turn my back on it. I would rather live in the crater of Vesuvius."

"For many things," said Mina, ignoring his remark, "I should like to stay on here."

This observation did not please Wilhelm, and he smiled unamiably.

"Where is Dobbs?" he asked at length. "Do you know, Oswald?"

Did I know?

"Dobbs went fishing this morning," I said, with some hesitation. "It's not late yet."

"Oh, I don't question her ability to take care of herself. I am very sorry she should miss the opportunity of seeing me once more."

"She will no doubt bear the disappointment bravely," I said, with a sudden flash of anger.

"Ah, you judge her feelings by your own. By the way, who's that on the bicycle, scorching along the road?"

Of course it was Tommy. He evidently did not see us, for he came tearing along and dismounted only a few yards away.

"It's Tommy McCree," said Mina, indifferently.

"I ought to know the look of that bicycle," cried Wilhelm, springing up. "Come here, you young rascal; where did you get that from?"

If only Tommy had not dismounted, he might have escaped, but as it was it was impossible. Wilhelm collared him. My feelings were beyond description. Were we to have the whole matter out there and then? That was not my intention. Everything depended on Tommy not revealing the purport of his errand to Dalavich.

"I—I borrowed it, sir," whimpered Tommy. He looked at me, but I could give no sign. If he gave me away, I did not know what would happen. I had not the facility of explaining away an awkward situation.

"Who gave you permission?" cried Wilhelm, shaking the boy violently. I could almost hear his teeth rattling.

"No—no one, sir."

"He hasn't hurt your bicycle," said Mina, "and therefore you need not hurt him."

"I don't think that follows," said Wilhelm, viciously. "Confound his impudence!" He cuffed him.

"Please don't do that!" I cried, hastily. "Perhaps I ought—"

"I'll teach the young imp to take my bicycle!" cried Wilhelm.

"Let the boy go," Mina commanded, and her eyes blazed. For a moment Wilhelm seemed inclined to resent her interference, but his eyes dropped before hers, and his hand loosened on the lad's collar. Tommy twisted himself free.

CHAPTER XIX.

Long after Mina disappeared up the narrow staircase, I remained gazing vaguely after her, debating what to do next. I had passed the stage when I dared hope my wits might help me. I was right back against the wall. And I thanked Heaven that there was a chance of muscle coming into play.

Gradually out of the chaos of my thoughts there was evolved a clear, definite idea, to which, once formulated, I held with all the tenacity of my nature. And it was that Mina should not leave the house and Wilhelm should not enter it until the count had come to my aid, or I was physically *hors du combat*.

No further mental efforts for me! By brute force, if need be, Mina should remain within these four walls until such time as I was relieved of my responsibilities, either by the count's instructions or a *force majeure*.

The house was not large. It was a two-storied building, and the windows on the second story were small, and the drop from them to the ground was considerable. I wandered round the building and scanned the upper windows, returning satisfied that Mina could not escape from them. On the ground floor, too, there were points in my favor. The windows were all fitted with heavy shutters, which I fastened and padlocked with grim satisfaction. The front and back doors I bolted and locked, putting the keys in my pocket. Mina might have the free run of the house, but I defied her to make good her escape from it. Of course, there would be Wilhelm outside; but how could he enter without forcibly breaking in? And I did not intend to be idle while he made the attempt.

There was only one of the lower windows without shutters, and this was the parlor casement, which opened on hinges outwards. This window was about six or seven feet from the level outside, for, as I have already stated, the house stood on a rising ground. A wheelbarrow with a flowerpot on the top of it had been Dobbs' method of reaching the window when she—I mean, he—desired to converse through it. But besides its height from the ground, which was in my favor, it had a couple of heavy iron bars crossing it. No doubt the lodge was often left untenanted, and these were precautions against the predatory tramp. Wilhelm would not be able to break in through that window, especially if I were standing within with something heavy in my hand.

My resolve to keep her from Wilhelm by force was immovable. After all, what other course had I? I was proud of my plan and valorous as to its execution, until—until I heard her step on the stair, and, lo! I was a poor shaking coward again.

She came in. The twilight had fallen, and the room was in shadow.

"Why hasn't Annie lit the lamp?" she asked.

"Annie has not come back; in fact, she is not coming back," I said, awkwardly.

She looked up quickly. "How is that?"

"I gave her permission to go to Oban to see her relations and to hear that MacCuddie man. You see, I did not expect you to return."

"No, but there was Dobbs."

"Let me light the lamp," I said, hastily. Between us, we did it. The rose colored shade cast its warm tint on her face. I noticed she had changed her dress and put on a pretty, light-colored evening gown.

"I suppose it didn't occur to you," she said, lightly, "that a chaperon was necessary for you and Dobbs."

"No," I replied, "that did not occur to me."

She sat down at the table, and took up her work. "I suppose I shall have to go and forage for some supper presently."

"Let me do that," I said, quickly.

She sewed placidly. "We'll make Dobbs do it when she comes in. What is the good of having a princess about the house, if you don't make her useful." She smiled at me across the table. "We make a charmingly domesticated couple, don't we? No one would imagine that I was a bride bereft of a husband, and you a——"

"What am I?" I asked.

"A brother, whose dearly loved sister had returned to him unexpectedly." She threaded her needle pensively. "It is our last evening together, Oswald. Won't you put away that worried, haunted look?"

"I never felt happier," I asserted, and began to laugh rather foolishly.

She looked at me queerly. "Where can Dobbs be? I am getting anxious."

"There is no need," said I.

"You know where she is?" she asked, instantly.

I hesitated. My fatal lack of resource in invention made me her easy victim.

"Oh, no," I said at length.

She laid down her work. "Oswald, what do you mean?"

"I don't mean anything."

"Why that guilty flush?"

"There isn't one. You are quite mistaken."

She leaned across the table towards me, her earnest eyes on mine. "Where is Dobbs?"

"I don't know where he is," I responded, sullenly.

"He!" She sank back upon her chair, and the color faded slightly from her face. I felt like a schoolboy detected in a fraud. What a shame it was! It was she who ought to have felt like that.

"What do you know?" she asked at length.

"I know everything," I said, almost timidly.

"How did you find out?"

"I came across Dobbs bathing in the loch."

"Oh!"

Again a painful silence intervened. I felt I had committed an indelicacy. She, too, seemed embarrassed, and taking up her work became intent upon a difficult stitch.

She spoke at length. "What have you done with him?"

"I have sent him back to Germany."

She nodded. "I am glad you have done that."

I suppose ten minutes elapsed without further remark, and then she laid down her work.

"I am going to get you some supper," she said.

"I will come and help you."

"No, I won't hear of it."

"It will be no trouble."

"You can lay the cloth and get the cutlery out of that cupboard. Now, do what I tell you. You will only cause confusion in the kitchen."

She went out of the room with a backward smile in my direction, but she did not go into the kitchen. I heard her go upstairs to her room. In less than a minute she was down again, and I heard her fumbling at the back door. Presently the door was flung open, and

she appeared with a cloak about her shoulders and a hat upon her head.

"The front and back doors are locked," she said, "and the keys are removed."

"How did you find that out?" I asked.

"I wanted to go into the garden to pick some flowers," she said.

"Is that why you have put on your new hat and that heavy cloak?"

"It gets chilly at nights," she said.

"Ah, that explains it, of course," I observed, politely.

"You don't appear to have laid the cloth," she remarked.

"You must have forgotten the supper things," I responded.

She looked me straight in the face.

"After supper we shall have a good deal to talk about," she said.

CHAPTER XX.

We were very polite to one another during supper.

"You may smoke," she observed, graciously, when we had finished.

I thanked her, and lit a cigarette. She still sat at the table, tracing the pattern of the tablecloth with an unused fork.

"Why did you lock the doors?" she asked, suddenly, without looking up.

"I was thinking of to-morrow."

"You mean that you will not allow me to go out to Wilhelm to-morrow? Is that what you mean?"

I gave up temporizing. "Yes," I responded, briefly.

"Do you seriously mean that you will endeavor to keep me a prisoner?"

"Yes, until——"

"Until what?"

"The count comes."

"You have telegraphed to him?"

"I have."

She glowered at me—there is no other word.

"And you actually think I shall submit to this—this constraint from you—you!"

"I don't ask you to permit it. I don't care whether you permit it or not. You will do what I let you do."

"This," she said, with some difficulty, "is impudence."

She tapped on the table with her knuckles. "How long do you intend to keep me here?"

"Till the count comes, or sends."

"How long will that be?"

"Oh, not more than a few days at the most."

"Oh, indeed! And how do you intend to feed me?"

"I really have not considered these minor matters. Annie has a barrel of oatmeal. Porridge is very sustaining."

"What a silly fellow you are, Oswald! Oh, what a very foolish scheme!"

"It isn't a scheme. I don't scheme. I leave that to Wilhelm."

"It was absurd of me to be angry," she said. "At the worst, you will only cause a scene. Of course, you can't keep me here against my will—against Wilhelm's will."

"I'm going to try."

She smiled in a very superior fashion. "I wonder you don't try to regard the matter from a common sense point of view. Do you really think a rough-and-tumble with Wilhelm will help you or me? I can see you and him rolling and fighting on the floor, blacking each other's eyes, tearing each other's hair, scratching——"

"Men don't scratch," I said, loftily.

"Ah, but perhaps I shall have to come to Wilhelm's aid. I have soldiers' blood in my veins. Think of us all three rolling and scratching and tearing. What a pity your hair is so short, Oswald! You won't give me a fair chance."

"It is you who make things ridiculous," I said. "It is really no laughing matter, for I shall resist Wilhelm to the death."

"Don't—don't you care for me any more, Oswald?" she asked, suddenly and very plaintively. "Only the night before last, you told me you loved me," she went on. "Has your love flown away so quickly? Ah, Oswald, how fickle you are!"

"I am not fickle," I answered, my heart pulsing with inconvenient rapidity. "I did not know then you were playing with me, laughing at me."

Then Mina sat up in her chair. "Oh, what shall I do!" she cried, and covering her face with her hands began to sob. I had not expected this. It had not entered into my calculations that she would take to tears. I stared at her uneasily, fidgeting in my chair. I half rose, and then sat down again. She was actually crying; I could hear her sob even if I did not see her tears.

"D-don't cry," I implored, in anguish. "It is all for the best. Don't you see I am acting in your interest? Can't you trust me?"

"What is to become of me?" she wept. "What am I to do? Where am I to go?"

"You will go back to your home," I said, soothingly, "and you will soon forget Wilhelm, whom you know you do not really love."

"Yes, I do," she cried. "How dare you say that?"

"Well, you have hinted as much yourself," I said. "You know you have."

"I haven't. It isn't true. And I can't go home. They are cruel to me at home. Oh, Oswald, don't send me back there. Dear, dear Oswald, don't let me go home. They will marry me to a man I hate, a man old enough to be my grandfather."

I interposed with some cheerfulness. "Oh, no, that is all off. There is no fear of that."

"How do you know?"

"The count has written to say so."

"It is all a pretense to get me back."

"No, it isn't. The Duke of Hanau absolutely refuses to have anything more to do with you."

She moved her hands rather suddenly from her face, which was suspiciously dry. "Oh, indeed!" she exclaimed. "That shows what wicked lies they have been telling about me. I am quite sure he wouldn't have given me up unless they had been telling lies. It just proves I cannot return to Germany."

"You ought not to assume anything of the kind," I answered, but I pushed back my chair in some perplexity.

"I simply must marry Wilhelm," she said, decidedly. "There is no other al-

ternative. You have an unreasoning dislike to Wilhelm."

"It would not be a legal marriage without your father's consent," I urged.

"That is nonsense," she said, decisively, "and you know it. And if it were so, all necessary sanctions would be given, if only to prevent a scandal, once we were married. How could it be otherwise?"

"You cannot cut yourself adrift from the responsibilities of your rank," I said.

"Wilhelm is no far descent," she answered. "If I were proposing to marry you, it would be different."

The truth of her remark struck me rather than its brutality. I turned away, not to show the sudden pain I felt. The next moment she was on her knees at my feet.

"Forgive me, Oswald," she whimpered, clinging to my knees. "Oh, please forgive me. I did not mean to say that. I did not even think it. Oh, Oswald, I have hurt you. How could I! How could I!"

I looked in her face, so near to mine. There were real tears on her eyelashes now.

"You did not hurt me," I said, gently. "And what you said was perfectly true. I am afraid this is a trying night for us both. I expect we are both rather highly strung, and perhaps neither of us is saying exactly what we want to say. I see clearly that we have both made mistakes, and I think mine have been more serious than yours."

She wiped her eyes with her handkerchief, and turned to me with a bright smile. I did not realize she took my words as an expression of defeat and submission.

"Ah, Oswald," she said, almost tenderly, "I shall always realize how excellent your intentions were. The mistake you made was not to take into consideration my temperament—which, after all," she added, indulgently, "was excusable enough."

"I am glad you can find an excuse for me," I answered, a little puzzled. I still did not understand she had misapprehended me.

"I shall remember these days with a good deal of pleasure," she went on, "although we have had one or two rather stormy scenes. I hope I shall see you again often."

I thanked her.

"And now, good-night." She held out her hand. "If you had not told me you had ceased to care for me, I think I should have let you kiss my hand. But, of course, you do not care to do so now."

"I never said I had ceased to love you," I answered. I held her hand, and my heart was beating.

Her color rose. "Then you may," she said, softly.

I kissed it.

"Good-night." She turned to go, and then she paused to take up the vase which contained the bouquet she had carried that morning. "I shall take this to my room," she said, very sweetly, "because you arranged it for me. These flowers will remind me of your kindness in giving up your scheme."

I stared at her blankly. She was at the door before I realized what her words indicated. "I have not given up my scheme, as you call it," I said, indignantly, for I thought it was a woman's guile. "Why do you say that?"

She turned sharply.

"What?" she cried.

"There is a misunderstanding," I said, coldly. "I hope it is not an intentional misunderstanding. I have not given up my scheme, as you call it. Nothing will induce me to do that."

Her face turned white. She flung the flowers, vase and all, on the floor, and stamped on them furiously. I heard the cracking of crockery under her feet.

"You are a trickster!" she cried, vehemently. "I hate you! I despise you! A trickster, a mere trickster!"

I was aghast, but my temper came to my aid.

"You seem to take me seriously now," I said.

"Trickster!" she gasped, pointing at me with a scornful finger.

"Go to your room at once," I commanded.

She went.

CHAPTER XXI.

I made the armchair in the sitting room my bed that night, and, keeping myself awake with many pipes, sat waiting what the night might bring forth. Mina's room was exactly overhead, and I could hear her moving about. She seemed to be pacing restlessly to and fro, and I judged her mental perturbation had not calmed down.

Notwithstanding my resolve not to sleep, I fell from time to time into a half slumber, from which I would start to listen intently. Once I tiptoed up the stairs to the door of her room, but no sound within gave me ground for alarm; and I returned to my chair. The night at that time of the year was short, yet it seemed long before the crow of a cock betokened the approach of dawn.

With that welcome signal, I flung open the window, and let in the fresh air, which revived me not a little. I drew a chair close, and watched the sky lightening. I wondered what I should be saying or doing at sunrise the next day.

I was in a feverish state of excitement, for the period of waiting tired me severely. The sun rose in the heavens, but it rose far too slowly to please me. At five o'clock, the desire for breakfast arose within me, and with it the remembrance that the princess had to be provided for. It was with satisfaction I realized that I had something to occupy my mind and hands.

I went to the kitchen, stumbling over unfamiliar utensils. What would Mina like? Would she like porridge to start with, followed by some eggs carefully poached, and rashers of bacon still frizzling from the pan? To make a kettle boil quickly requires art, but without art much can be achieved with care and patience. At seven o'clock the fire was blazing and the kettle was boiling, but long ere this I had myself breakfasted on the remains of yesterday's supper and buttermilk. The princess must, of course, have tea. My attempt to poach eggs resulted in a sticky mess on the hearthrug, and my porridge was a lumpy gruel. I have never understood

why the rashers curled up in melancholy fashion in the frying pan and smelled of burning. However, I made some really excellent tea, and by dint of experiments on a number of eggs I hit at last upon the right time for boiling. I made some toast, which was easy. Anyone can make toast, for one can always scrape off the cinders with a knife.

On a tray, then, I placed a teapot, a cup and saucer, an egg and a pile of buttered toast. I did not forget the milk, and Mina did not take sugar.

I bore my tray upstairs and tapped timidly at her bedroom door. I could hear her moving within, but there was no answer.

I tapped again. "I have brought you your breakfast," I ventured, timidly.

She answered me this time. "I want no breakfast. How dare you! Take it away."

"How could I tell you didn't want breakfast?" I asked her, in an injured tone. "You usually take rather a large breakfast."

"I shall not bandy words with you," she said, haughtily. "Wilhelm will say all that is necessary when he comes."

"Very well," I responded, meekly.

"Who made that?" she asked, indicating the toast.

"I did," I answered, proudly.

She sniffed scornfully. "What is it?" she asked.

"Why, toast, of course."

"Don't you know the difference between scorched bread and toast?"

"No," I admitted, rather crestfallen.

She put her arm through the opening of the door and lifting the lid of the teapot looked in contemptuously. Then she touched the egg.

"Quite cold," she observed, with weary scorn. There was also a note of triumph in her voice.

"I am sorry. Shall I take it away?"

"Do you imagine, after the way that I have been treated, I can have an appetite?"

"I hoped that perhaps you might."

"Lay the tray down on the floor," she said. "It is not in the least likely that I shall touch it."

And on this she shut the door de-

cisively. I did as I was bid, though rather rebelliously, for it seemed a monstrous waste to leave unconsumed so appetizing a meal. The fragrance of the buttered toast followed me as I went downstairs. I returned in less than two minutes, to replace it with some slices of bread and butter, and behold, the tray had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXII.

The morning wore on, and the impending struggle could not be long delayed. I made a final round and tested every lock and every bolt, and shook the iron bars which guarded the parlor window. Not long after, I heard Mina's step on the stair, and I picked up the *Scotsman* of the day before and buried myself in its pages.

Mina entered the room with an affectation of light-heartedness—she was humming a tune—and wished me "Good-morning" as if it were our first meeting.

"Good-morning," I replied, and glanced over my paper to observe that she wore her wedding gown, and carried her hat on her finger. She sat down, and began to put on her gloves.

"A lovely day, isn't it?" she said, brightly. "I'm so glad."

"So am I," I answered, to say something.

"I'm not superstitious," she went on, "but one can't help recalling the saying, 'Happy the bride the sun shines on.'"

"I don't think I have heard it before," I said, in politely conversational vein.

Her gloves seemed to require all her attention. "I hope Wilhelm won't be late," she said, in a disengaged way. "And I do hope nothing will have happened to our Oban minister."

To these remarks I had no response to make. So I resumed my perusal of the paper.

"Won't you pick me a bouquet to-day?" she asked, after a pause, smiling on me very charmingly.

I put down my paper, and eyed her severely.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter," she said, a little hastily. "And, in any case, I should prefer Wilhelm to do it."

Simultaneously, we heard the sound of wheels. Her cheeks flushed and her eyes shone.

"Wilhelm, at last!" she exclaimed.

I said nothing, and pretended to be reading. There was a ring and a knock.

"Wilhelm is at the door," she said.

I took no notice. Her color rose higher, and she came swiftly to my side.

"There is still time, Oswald—still time," she murmured, and her hand rested lightly on my shoulder. "Go and open the door, and I will forget all that is past, and regard you again as a dear, dear brother."

I maintained a dogged silence.

Her voice took a higher pitch.

"I order you to open the door. You shall not treat me as a child. Open the door, or I shall be forced to call Wilhelm."

I looked at her gravely. How beautiful she was! Her eyes met mine, and suddenly dropped. The bell continued to peal. She hesitated for a moment, and then, before I guessed her intention, she had sprung to the window and flung open the casement.

"Wilhelm!" she called, loudly. "Wilhelm!"

I was at her side in a moment, but I could not close the window without using violence, for she placed her hands on the frame and held fast. She glanced at me defiantly over her shoulder, and her look dared me to touch her.

Wilhelm came tearing round the corner from the front entrance.

"What is the meaning of this?" he cried. "Are you all dead or only deaf?"

"I am a prisoner," cried Mina. "Oswald refuses to let me out."

"What the deuce——" he began.

I interposed. "Let me warn you, sir, that if you come within reach, I shall strike you as hard as my strength allows."

Wilhelm stood still for a moment, and seemed to ponder.

"I suppose the youngster has found out something?" he said, to Mina.

"He has found out everything," she

replied, briefly. "And he has been most insolent——"

"And Dobbs—what's become of her?" he interposed.

"He has gone back to Germany," said Mina. "Oswald's treatment of me——"

"Kindly let me close the window," I said.

She seized hold of the iron bars, and held tenaciously. "Do not dare to touch me," she cried, passionately.

Wilhelm stood passively, seemingly lost in thought.

"Mina," he said, suddenly, "are there any other facts I ought to know? I cannot take steps till I know everything. How did he find out? What has he done?"

Mina told him incoherently how the truth had come out, and that I had telegraphed to the count. I stood by biting my lips with impatience, but quite at a loss how to end the conversation.

"The count cannot possibly arrive to-night," said Wilhelm, thoughtfully. "At the earliest, he won't be here before to-morrow. It's all right, Mina; we have plenty of time."

"Oswald has behaved shamefully," cried Mina. "He has no right to keep me here against my will. Make him open the door, Wilhelm. He has the keys in his pocket."

Wilhelm looked up at me with an evil gleam in his eyes, but said nothing. He turned on his heel, and scrutinized the windows on that side of the house. Then he turned the corner and disappeared.

As soon as he had gone, Mina released her hold of the iron bars, and I closed the casement. She sank into the armchair and burst into dry, angry sobs, which distorted her face unpleasantly. "I hate you," she kept saying. "I hate—hate—hate you."

"Don't repeat yourself so often," I said, with asperity. "I will take it for granted."

"I hate—hate——"

"For Heaven's sake, stop that!" I cried, irritably. "Surely, you have enough courage to take things quietly."

"I hate—hate—hate you," she reiterated.

It was not more than half an hour before Wilhelm again made his presence felt, although the interval seemed much longer. I heard him moving outside, and the next moment the casement was burst open with a great shattering of glass. He had discovered a long pole—the stripped trunk of a fir tree—and, using it as a battering-ram, had broken the fastenings off the hinges. The frame hung limply inwards on one hinge.

Mina shrieked at the crash, and I sprang forward, but Wilhelm was beyond my reach.

"Mina!" he called.

"Yes, yes; I am here," she cried.

"I can get you out of the house if you do exactly what I tell you. I can break open the door leading to the kitchen if you will draw back the bolts at the top and bottom. The lock is old and flimsy. Do you understand?"

"Yes, yes," cried Mina.

"Go and pull back the bolts."

I seized hold of her wrist. "You will do nothing of the kind," I said.

"How dare you touch me! Leave go of my arm. You are hurting me."

She wrestled with me, and a poignant feeling of shame swept over me. I let go her wrist, and sprang to the parlor door. Unfortunately it had no key in its lock. I was on the horns of a dilemma. If I let Mina leave the room, I must accompany her, or she would pull back the bolts of the door. If I went with her, Wilhelm would probably, with the aid of the fir pole, wrench off the bars that guarded the parlor window, and so effect an entrance. It seemed essential that Mina should remain in the parlor. I put my back to the door.

"I am very sorry," I said, unhappily. "I do hope I have not hurt you much. I beg your pardon."

"If you are sorry, you will let me pass," she said.

"No, I cannot let you pass."

She stood confronting me for some moments in absolute silence. And then Wilhelm's face appeared at the window. He had evidently climbed up on the flowerpot, superimposed on the wheelbarrow.

"Stand aside, Mina," he said, "and let me argue with this chivalrous young gentleman."

Mina turned towards him, and gave a sudden cry, and the reason was only too apparent to me, for Wilhelm held a sporting rifle in his hand.

"I found this useful weapon in McCree's cottage, where, I understand, it has remained since the Right Hon. James MacCuddie's first and last deer-stalking expedition. I mention its history to convince you of its efficacy."

"Oh, be very careful," besought Mina.

"I shall be most careful," returned Wilhelm. "If Oswald will act with ordinary common sense, there will be no need for Annie to hang his portrait by the side of her late lamented husband."

Mina became greatly agitated, and ran across to the window.

"You won't shoot, Wilhelm," she implored. "Promise me, you won't shoot." She caught hold of the gun and tried to take it from him in a way that made me thrill with terror.

"It will not be Oswald who is shot, if you are not careful," said Wilhelm, warningly. "Leave go of the barrel, Mina, if you value your life."

"Stand away from that door," he commanded. "Let Mina pass out, or take the consequences."

I stretched out my arms and took a grip of the woodwork on either side of the door. Wilhelm lowered his rifle.

"I am not in jest," he said, grimly. "I will show you I am not."

He leveled the rifle and pulled the trigger. The noise in that small room was deafening, and the place was filled with smoke. Chips of wood and plaster fell at my feet, for the bullet had lodged about a foot above my head.

"You have killed him!" screamed Mina. "Oh, my God! if you have killed him!"

"I did not intend to hit you," said Wilhelm, "but next time you will not escape so lightly. I hope you understand I am in dead earnest."

"I shall not let the princess leave this room," I said, sullenly. "You can shoot me if you like. You are a liar and a

swindler. Why shouldn't you be a murderer, also?"

"I don't want to hurt you," said Wilhelm. "I certainly don't intend to kill you. But I swear that unless you stand aside and let the princess pass out, I will give you cause to remember me."

"Do your worst," I said, very grandly. "I am not afraid. Shoot if you dare."

"Very well," he said. He raised the rifle quickly and fired. I felt this time a red-hot iron pierce the palm of my outstretched hand, and my arm fell to my side. With an effort I raised it. The bullet had passed right through the palm, and was imbedded in the door behind. I looked, with something like curiosity, at the clean-cut hole bored through the center of my hand. It seemed so strange and impossible. And then the blood came, and a pain shot up my arm. I turned giddy and sick. Blood dripped to the floor. Mina heard or saw it, and gave a horrified cry.

"Push him aside, Mina," said Wilhelm. "He will not try to prevent you going out."

She rose and approached me; her eyes seemed fixed with terror.

"You are bleeding," she whispered. "He has shot you!"

"You can't get out yet," I said. "He must shoot again."

"Again!" she shrieked. "Ah, not again!" She rushed between Wilhelm and myself, and flung out her arms as if to protect me from more bullets.

"Mina," said Wilhelm, angrily, "don't be foolish. I am not going to shoot again. There is no need. Push him aside, or step over him."

"No, you can't go out," I said, and propped myself up against the door. My hand was bleeding freely, and I tried to stanch the flow of blood with my handkerchief. Mina ran to me, and sank on her knees by my side.

"Oswald, Oswald; I never meant this."

"I do not blame you," I said.

She tried to assist me with the bandage I was twisting round by hand, but her fingers trembled so, she rather hindered than helped.

"Come, Mina," cried Wilhelm, impa-

tiently, "a truce to this folly. Oswald is not seriously hurt. Are you coming with me or not?"

She looked up almost as if she had forgotten his presence.

"No, Wilhelm," she said, "I shall not go with you now."

"What do you mean?" he cried, savagely.

"I shall not go with you now," she repeated. Her face was pale and drawn. "I cannot leave Oswald to bleed to death alone. I know he will die. And I love him very dearly."

"You love him!" shouted Wilhelm. "Do you know what you are saying?"

"I think I have loved him for a long time," she said, dreamily, "but I did not know it till you shot him. It doesn't matter much my saying so, as he is dying. Oh, dear; oh, dear; I think I am going to faint."

And she fainted in the quietest and gentlest manner possible, with her head resting on my boot.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"May I ask what you are doing at the top of that flowerpot with a gun?" said a fresh voice, which was vaguely familiar.

Wilhelm turned. "Who are you, madam, and what the devil do you want?"

"I have already indicated what I want to know. What are you doing with that gun?"

"I cannot see that it is any business of yours."

"Perhaps I am unjustifiably curious." I suddenly became conscious that I was listening to the duchess. "But you must acknowledge that to point firearms through a window into the interior of a dwelling house needs some explanation. And, besides, the house belongs to me. So you see, I have some right to make inquiries on the point."

"There is a mad animal in the room," said Wilhelm. "I advise you, madam, to go away at once."

"What kind of animal?" queried my grandmother. "Surely not a mad bull?"

"No, madam. A puppy with the disposition."

"If you will kindly descend, I should like a peep."

"Go away, go away," said Wilhelm, irritably.

"I insist on seeing for myself who or what is in that room. Unless you descend, I shall wheel the barrow away from the window, and the consequences to you will be disastrous."

I think the indomitable old lady was as good as her word, for Wilhelm suddenly disappeared. I heard sounds as of scuffling, and my grandmother's voice crying: "Robert!" After an interval, a man's face appeared at the window. It disappeared as suddenly as it had come.

"Oh, your grace," I heard him exclaim, "there are two dead corpses on the floor."

I was abstractedly contemplating a far-away world, but I found strength to speak.

"It's all right, we're not dead," I managed to murmur.

"It's Oswald's voice!" my grandmother exclaimed. "Help me up, Robert; help me up this very moment."

"I fear this flowerpot will not bear your grace," said Robert.

"I shall risk it," replied my dear grandmother. "Be prepared to catch me if I fall."

And then my grandmother's face appeared on the other side of the bars, which she grasped to steady herself.

"Oh, Oswald, what is the meaning of this terrible business? And who is this young person?"

"The princess," I said, in a husky whisper.

"Is she dead?"

"Oh, no," I assured her. Mina, as if to answer for herself, showed signs of life.

"You have been protecting her with your life," said the duchess. "I see it all! Oswald, my dear, brave, noble boy, how can I get at you?"

"The keys are in my pocket," I answered. "I think perhaps I can stand. The dizziness is passing away. I am not very much hurt."

Mina, too, began to stir. She opened her eyes. "What has happened? Where am I? Oh, I remember! You are not dead, Oswald?"

"Not in the least," I responded, with cheerful alacrity.

"But you are dying, aren't you?"

"Certainly not."

"Who is that old lady at the window, Oswald?"

"The Duchess of Pendleton. Perhaps I ought to introduce you. The Princess Isa of Saxe-Cassel—the Duchess of Pendleton."

Mina bowed mechanically.

"I decline to stay here any longer," cried the duchess. "I insist upon being permitted to enter. Is there no one else in the house?"

"No," I replied; "but I will open the door for you." I staggered to my feet. Mina, too, rose, and we mutually supported one another. "Will you take the keys out of my left pocket, Mina? Thank you. Please give them to the duchess, and we will go and pull back the bolts."

We tottered together out of the room, and in a few minutes the duchess and Robert, who turned out to be her grace's coachman, entered. In less time than it takes to write it, I was deposited on a couch, and Robert was dispatched for a doctor. And when an hour later the doctor arrived and had bound up my hand, and had insisted on putting me to bed on the ground of my high temperature, I felt, save for a throbbing pain and a sense of weakness, little the worse for my wound.

"And now," said the duchess to Mina, when the doctor had left, "while Oswald enjoys a refreshing sleep, you will come with me to another room, and tell me everything. Everything, my dear; do you understand?"

"I want to ask Mina something," I said.

"Ask what you like, my boy," said the duchess, gently.

"But I don't want you to hear."

The duchess drew herself up. "I don't like secrets," said she. However, she moved away.

"Mina," I whispered, when she came

and bent over me, "Mina, I can't prevent you going away now. Are you going away, Mina?"

She burst into tears. "How cruel of you to ask me that!"

"Don't cry, dear. I—didn't know, and I couldn't bear to think——"

"I shall never see Wilhelm again willingly," said Mina, drying her eyes. "I promise you that, Oswald."

The duchess now came and patted my pillow and smoothed the coverlet in a proprietary fashion.

"If you were well enough to be questioned," she remarked, "I should ask you why you deceived me the last time I was here."

"I never deceived you."

She regarded me sadly, and shook her head. "The princess was only the princess' companion, then."

"It was I who was deceived," I said, a little wearily, as I think the duchess noticed.

"Well, it doesn't matter." She bent over the bed and kissed me. "Sleep, my dear boy, and get well quickly, for I have much to hear and much to tell."

The duchess left the room without making any promise, and I fell into a peaceful slumber.

When I awoke, Annie had returned, for she came repeatedly into my room on pretended errands, her face alight with a joyful wonder. She moved on tiptoe, with her finger to her lips, but I knew that one sentence from me would awaken an avalanche of words. I pretended to be asleep, till Mina peeped in, when I admitted my wakefulness. The next moment I heard the duchess ascending the stairs. It is not the fate of every young man to have so many tender and solicitous nurses. I did not like to be ungrateful, but I could not help meditating that three nurses in one small bedroom was a little trying to the invalid.

"I think," I said, after responding dutifully to three cheerful smiles, "I should like to get up."

But my nurses would not hear of this. They put the notion aside with little laughs of scorn.

"Then, can I have something to eat,

please?" I said. It was five in the afternoon, and my breakfast in the early morning had been of the slightest. My nurses were loud in self-reproaches, for it appeared that the necessity of feeding me had not occurred to any of them. The two younger women rushed to the lower regions. The duchess remained. "The princess has told me everything," she said. "She admits she has not behaved quite nicely."

"You must not believe anything she says against herself," I replied. "She had every excuse."

"I like her," said my grandmother, abruptly, "even though I blame her. And, if I am not mistaken, you like her, too."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Some days later a party of four sat together on the edge of the moor just outside the lodge. There was my grandmother in a wicker chair, which groaned audibly under her weight; the count was also there, and he occupied the parlor armchair, in which he sat in a tortuous attitude, with his legs intertwined. Mina and I completed the party, but we had to be satisfied with canvas stools. Annie made fitful appearances with the appliances for afternoon tea. The day was hot, and the duchess fanned herself vigorously with a newspaper.

"I must return to-morrow," observed the count. "I came in haste, but I intend to return more leisurely."

The duchess sighed. "We have had two or three pleasant days, count. But I, too, ought to be with my son. He is still in the yacht, and he must be weary of Oban Bay."

"I am sorry to hear of his illness," said the count. "It is sad for one so young——"

The duchess ceased fanning herself for a moment. "Poor Pendleton was never young," she said. "But I cannot realize he is likely to pass away before his mother." She laid down the sock she was knitting—I knew for whom, for she had measured my foot with a piece of string—and felt for her handkerchief. "It was he who sent me here, for he in-

sisted on Oswald being brought to him. So Oswald must come with me tomorrow."

I felt flattered. It was certainly kind of the duke to desire to make my acquaintance. At the same time, whether I desired to go with my grandmother or not depended on circumstances.

"That disposes of three of us," remarked the count, "but I think we are four."

Mina flushed a little, but went on with the silk tie she was knitting—I knew for whom, for she had asked what was my favorite color.

"If the princess will accompany us —" began the duchess. My spirits rose high.

"A delightful suggestion," cried the count, with an alacrity which was almost indecent.

"I shall be charmed, dear duchess," said Mina, demurely. Did her eyes meet mine? If they did, it was only for a moment.

Suddenly the count, who, by the way, was the only one of the party facing the narrow strip of road which ran through the heather, made a convulsive movement in his chair. It appeared, for a moment, as if he was about to execute a somersault; but he contended himself with a violent shifting of position, and a clutching of one foot with both hands, very much as if he intended to carry it to his mouth.

"Yet, before the Princess Isa"—he hardly ever spoke to her direct, and never alluded to her by her pet name of Mina—"accepts your kind invitation, it will only be honest on my part to give her the message her father sends." He let go his foot and gripped his knees, one with each hand. "The grand duke withdraws his objection to his daughter's marriage with my unworthy son. Having regard to the painful scandals which her unexplained absence has created, he feels sure that she cannot now do better than marry Wilhelm. Everyone will admit she cannot do worse. The grand duke, therefore, not only withdraws all objections, but insists, absolutely insists, on the marriage taking place at once."

My grandmother made an exclamation which sounded like an expletive. I felt as if every drop of blood in my veins had rushed to my head. Mina went on placidly with her work.

"What do you say, Mina?" asked the duchess, with a note of anxiety in her voice.

Mina paused for a moment to make sure she had not dropped a stitch. "I wouldn't marry the count's horrid son," she said, in a matter-of-fact tone, "if I had to be burned at the stake for refusing."

"Why?" cried the count, with seeming fury. "Why?"

"Just because." This was the only reason she would give. She smiled pensively to herself as she continued to work.

The count shut both eyes, and leaned back in his chair. "I observe," he said, "a man approaching on a bicycle. What can he want? I hope he brings good news; I have an anxious temperament."

We turned and looked. It was Wilhelm coming towards us.

The duchess began to fan herself with more vigor. Mina went on with her knitting. I came to the conclusion that apoplexy was not a pleasant death.

Wilhelm leaned his bicycle against the hedge with care. I think he dusted the back wheel with his cap, and then, with an easy step, he sauntered towards us.

"Warm, isn't it?" he observed. "And how are you, my father?"

"Excellently well, my son," replied the count, still with his eyes closed.

Wilhelm bowed to the duchess, smiled on Mina, and nodded to me.

"I have run across," he said, "to hear what you all have to say to me."

The count opened his eyes. "For my part," he answered, after careful consideration, "I do not think I have anything to say."

"And Oswald?" asked Wilhelm, politely, turning to me.

I could not speak. I shook my head.

"Surely you have not forgotten your promise," he said, reproachfully.

"What promise?" asked the duchess, sharply.

"Oswald promised me five thousand

pounds if I gave up the princess. I have decided to give up the princess."

I gasped feebly. Mina went on knitting. From her manner, she might have been alone on the deserted moorland.

"And why have you decided to give up the princess?" the count inquired, subduing something that sounded like a chuckle.

"Because," replied Wilhelm, "she confessed her affections had alighted on this young gentleman." He indicated me.

The count frowned. "Why do you lie so pointlessly?" he said, sharply, for the first time exhibiting anger.

"I never lie pointlessly," responded Wilhelm, "and in this particular case I am telling you the truth. Ask her yourself."

"Is it true?" demanded the count, turning almost fiercely on Mina.

"Quite true," replied Mina, placidly.

A spasm passed over the count's face, and he seemed to collapse into the recess of his chair. A tired little man, with a worn face, appeared to have taken his place.

Wilhelm went on easily. "You see, in justice to myself I could not introduce into my family circle a young person whose affections are so easily transferable."

The count spoke at last. "I suppose," he said, uneasily, "you have no money."

"I have only a few pounds," Wilhelm answered.

"I will telegraph Mr. Parsons to pay you one hundred pounds on application."

"A hundred pounds!"

"Your allowance will be resumed," continued the count. "But it will be remitted to a bank in Johannesburg, to be paid monthly on personal application only."

"Really, your proposals do not err on the side of generosity," expostulated Wilhelm.

"Now, go," said the count. Wilhelm hesitated, but the count's steady gaze seemed to disconcert him; and after a moment, he turned and moved away. None of us spoke until he had mounted his bicycle and disappeared out of sight.

The count sat with his chin on his chest, his face twitching almost convulsively. Then the duchess rose.

"I think it is getting chilly," she said, and moved in her stately way towards the house. Mina rose to follow her, but as she passed the count's chair he seized her arm in his bony fingers.

"You leave with me to-morrow for Germany," he directed.

Mina did not reply, but she looked towards me.

"The princess will act as a free agent," I cried.

He let go her arm, and turned his deep-set eyes on me. Mina moved away quickly towards the house, and I rose to follow her, but he stopped me with a gesture.

"Sit down," he ordered. "We must have an understanding."

I sat down reluctantly. He kept his eyes on me, eyes which could awe a bolder man than I could pretend to be.

"Are you, too, plotting against me?" he asked, harshly.

"I don't know what you mean."

"Is it true the princess loves you?"

"She says so," I answered, feeling extremely uncomfortable.

"And you love her?"

"Yes, I love her."

There was a pause. I did not venture to look at him, but I felt as if his eyes were burning me.

"I need not tell you," he said, quietly, "that the princess is the only daughter of a reigning sovereign."

"I know," I replied.

"And that you—you are a bastard, whose only income, apart from charity, is the salary I pay you."

"You are offensive," I replied, hotly.

"Whether I am offensive or not, have I stated the facts?"

I hesitated for a moment. "I suppose you have," I allowed.

"And you aspire to the hand of a princess?" he asked, cuttingly.

"I have not said so," I answered. "I never even hoped until——"

"Until when?" he interrupted, sharply.

"No shadow of hope ever crossed my

mind until just now, when you said her father had cast her off and her name was a byword."

"When I said that," replied the count, "I lied."

"Why did you do that?" I asked, quickly.

"I wished to satisfy myself that the danger had passed. That is all. There is no breath of scandal against the princess' name. I have watched over her reputation with greater solicitude than many a father would have shown for a dearly loved daughter. I have done so, not from love or liking for her, but for the sake of the name she bears."

I rose. "I admit that I can never marry the princess. It would not be honorable for me to do so."

"Does she understand that?" he asked, eagerly.

"I do not know what she understands," I answered, stiffly.

"Will you make it clear to her?"

"If you desire it."

He stretched out his hand, but I ignored it. "My dear Oswald," he said, "I have done you an injustice. But you will agree with me that the less you see of the princess the better. She must come back with me to Germany."

It was inevitable that she and I must part. I saw that clearly enough.

"I can't make her go back to Germany," I said, sullenly.

"You can tell her it is her duty and your wish that she should go."

"I can advise her to go," I said, with a sigh.

He also rose. "I trust you implicitly, Oswald," he said. He went a few steps towards the house and then he stopped. "I will send her to you. Make her duty clear to her."

He had not been gone more than a few minutes when Mina came slowly towards me.

"The count says you want me, Oswald," she said.

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"To say good-by. I am going away."

Her face paled. "Do you mean that?"

"Yes."

"Is there no other way?"

"None."

She sank into a chair. "No," she said, sadly, "there is no other way. I see it, too. Oh, Oswald, things are very difficult for you and me. They are worse for me than for you, for you will be able to forget."

"Never," I answered, shortly.

"Ah, you say so." She smiled faintly. "But no man remembers long. For him, the world is so full of other interests. But I shall remember till I die."

"I love you, Mina," I said, hoarsely. "If the suffering could be on my shoulders only, I would ask you to defy the world."

"And if you asked me," she replied, simply, "I should consent. But you will not ask me, Oswald."

"No, I shall not ask you."

We sat in silence, and then I rose.

"Good-by, dear one," I said.

"Good-by."

I took her hand in mine and kissed it passionately.

We went into the house. In the parlor we found the duchess and the count.

"I hear," said the duchess to Mina, "you have decided not to come with us."

"No, I am going back to Germany. Oswald thinks it best."

The duchess took her hand. "Sit down, dear. And, Oswald, sit on my other side. I have something to say. Count, will you listen very attentively?"

We all sat in strained and awkward attitudes while the duchess smiled on the circle.

"I came here," she began, "to fetch Oswald to my poor son, who is slowly dying. He was anxious to see Oswald. Can you guess why?"

None of us attempted to guess. The duchess continued.

"Oswald, your mother had a secret. She had promised my son, Oswald, never to reveal it, and even after his death she considered her promise binding. Perhaps your mother was not very wise, Oswald, but she acted according to her lights. Cannot you guess the secret? It was revealed to me when I went through the letters from your

father to her which she had preserved. Oswald, my dearest boy, surely you can guess it!"

We stared blankly at each other.

"Then I will tell it to you," said the duchess. "Your mother and your father were legally married. Do you understand the difference it makes? Count, count, surely you understand?"

The count pressed his forehead with the palm of his hand. "Oswald was your younger son, and he married, and this Oswald is his son. Ah!"

"Yes, yes," cried the duchess, almost breathlessly.

"You have only one other son, the present duke, and he is not married, and is—ah!"

The silence was not broken for a long

time. And then the count frowned and tapped the table with his knuckles.

"The marriage of a grand duke's daughter to an English duke would be a *mésalliance*, unless the duke was of blood royal."

"Such marriages are made every day," urged the duchess.

"The difficulties are perhaps not insuperable," observed the count, thoughtfully.

The duchess was delighted. "Oswald, kiss me," she cried. But my uninjured hand was groping across her capacious lap for another's hand, which it found and held.

"I came alone," said the count, almost gayly, "and I perceive that I shall return alone."



THE SALT-MARSHES

A FLOOD of silver, pale beneath the moon,
Where naught but slender, gleaming reeds emerge
To trace the outline of the lonely verge
That knows no sound except the wind's low croon,
The mournful cry of some swift-passing loon,
Or, far away, the everlasting surge
And murmur of the traitor tides that urge
Strange craft to wreckage on the distant dune.

No human voice has ever echoed here,
No human step has stirred the water weeds,—
Mysterious, solemn, haunted by the fear
Of ancient legend, and of ghostly deeds,—
Only the brooding skies behold and bless
These silent hostages of loneliness.

CHARLOTTE BECKER.

WHY WEARY WENT A-WOOING

By B. M. Bower

"WHO are you going t' take. Weary?" Cal Emmett lowered his left eyelid very gently, for the benefit of the others, and drew a match sharply along the wall just over his head.

"Myself," answered Weary, sweetly, though 'twas a sore subject.

"You're sure going in bum comp'ny, then," retorted Cal.

"Who'se going t' pilot the schoolma'am?" blurted Happy Jack.

"You can search *me*," said Weary, in a you-make-me-exceedingly tired tone. "She sure ain't going with yours truly."

"Ain't she asked yuh yet?" fliered Cal. "She told me the other day she was going t' take advantage of woman's privilege, this year, and choose her comp'ny. Then she wanted t' know if I would bring a note over—but I couldn't. I was headed t' other way and couldn't stop."

"You wasn't headed toward Len Adams, was you?" asked Weary, softly.

"She'll be over, all right," declared Happy Jack. "Little Willie ain't forgot, yuh can gamble on that. He's just like darling brother—"

At this point Happy Jack ducked precipitately and a flapping, four-buckled overshoe hurtled past his head, and landed with considerable force upon the unsuspecting stomach of Cal, stretched luxuriously upon his bunk. Cal doubled like a threatened caterpillar and groaned—and Weary, feeling that justice had not been defeated even though he had aimed at another culprit, grinned complacently.

Weary was notoriously shy of women. When I say shy, I do not mean that he was bashful, for he was not. He did

not twirl his hat in their presence, or get red in the face, or stammer, or make a fool of himself in any other manner. At dances, where he seemed to feel that there was safety in numbers, he was, to say the least, popular. He danced oftenest with the pretty girls, to be sure, but then, the pretty girls were the best dancers. He did not sit out any dances with them, however, and had never been known to seek a dim corner if it held a feminine figure. Rather, he would retreat to the entry and smoke a cigarette in untroubled calm.

But at the leap year ball, given on New Year's night, when the ladies were invited to "choose your pardners for the hull dance, regardless of who brought yuh," the schoolma'am had forsaken Joe Meeker, with whose parents she boarded, and had chosen Weary. The Flying-U boys had, with one accord, grinned at him in a way that promised many things. So far, every promise had been conscientiously fulfilled.

They brought him many friendly messages, to which he returned unfriendly answers. He accused them openly of trying to load him, at which they were shocked. They told him the schoolma'am said she felt drawn toward him, he looked *so* like her darling brother, who had spilled his blood on San Juan hill. Cal was exceeding proud of this invention, since it seemed to "go down" with Weary better than most of the lies they told.

You will understand from this that Weary had considerable provocation for throwing that overshoe.

"What horse are you going to ride?" asked Chip, tactfully.

"Glory. I'm thinking of putting him up against Bert Rogers' Flopper. Bert's

getting too nifty over that cayuse, he needs to be walked away from once. Glory's the lad that can learn 'em things about running, if——"

"Yeah—if!" This from Cal, who had recovered speech. "Yuh got a written guarantee from Glory that he'll run?"

"Huh," croaked Happy Jack. "If he runs it'll likely be backwards, if it ain't a dancin'-bear stunt on 'is hind feet. Yuh can gamble it'll be what yuh don't want and ain't got no money on—that there's Glory from the ground up."

"Oh, I don't know," drawled Weary, placidly. "I ain't setting him before the public as a twin t' Mary's little lamb, but I'll risk him. He's a good little horse, when he feels that way, and he can run—and, darn him, he's got t' run!"

Shorty quit snoring and rolled over. "Betche two t' one he won't run," he said, digging his fists into his eyes like a baby.

Weary, dead game to the last, promptly took him up, though he knew he was taking desperate chances.

"Betche, even up, he runs backward," grinned Happy Jack, and Weary put five dollars up on that.

The rest of the afternoon was filled with Glory, so to speak—and much coin was hazarded upon his doing every unseemly thing that a horse can do at a horse race on the Fourth of July—except the thing that he did do—from which you will undoubtedly gather that Glory was not an ordinary cayuse, but had a reputation to maintain. To the day of his death he maintained it.

Dry Lake was nothing if not patriotic. Every legal holiday—and some that were not, was observed in true Dry Lake manner, to the tune of violins and the swish-swish of slipped feet upon a polished floor. The Glorious Fourth, however, was celebrated with more elaborate amusements. On that day men met, organized, practiced and played a matched game of ball with great dispatch and gusto. After that they arranged their horse races over the bar of the saloon, rode, ran or walked to the quarter-mile stretch of level road beyond the stockyards to witness the

running, then hurried to settle the results over the bar where they had drunk to the preliminaries.

Bert Rogers came early, riding Flopper. Men swarmed from the saloon to gather around the horse that held the record of beating a "real race horse" the summer before. So far, he had swept everything before him in his shortest dash, the quarter-mile, and on this day Weary alone seemed ready to take up the gauntlet.

When the Flying-U boys clattered over the hill in a bunch, they were greeted with enthusiasm, for old Jim Whitmore's "Happy Family" was liked to a man. The enthusiasm did not extend to Glory, who was eyed askance by those who knew him. If the Flying-U boys had not backed him valiantly to a man, Glory would not have had a dollar risked upon him. This not because he could not run, but because of his erratic temper.

Glory was an alien, one of a carload shipped in from Arizona the summer before. He was a bright sorrel, with silvery mane and tail and white feet—a beauty, none could deny. His temper was another matter. Sometimes for days he was lamblake in his obedience, till Weary was lulled into the belief that "Glory's sure turned over a new leaf." Then things would happen. Once Weary walked with a cane for two weeks. Another time he walked ten miles in the rain. Once he did not walk at all, but sat on a rock and smoked cigarettes till his tobacco sack ran empty, waiting for Glory to get up and carry him home.

Any man but Weary would have ruined the horse with harshness, but Weary actually seemed proud of his antics and would laugh till the tears came telling of some new and hitherto undreamt of phase of "cussedness" in his pet.

On this day Glory was behaving beautifully. He had nearly squeezed the breath out of Weary that morning, when he went to saddle him in the stall, and afterwards had snatched Cal Emmett's hat off and stood upon it, which raised the boys' spirits wonderfully.

"Let him have his little fling here at home," argued Weary. "It's a cinch he'll be good the rest of the day."

So the boys took heart and told Weary they would see him through with the deal—which they did not.

When Bert Rogers and Weary ambled away down the dusty trail to the starting point, accompanied by most of the Flying-U boys and two or three from Bert's outfit, the crowd in the grand stand—which was the top rail of the stockyard fence—hushed expectantly.

When a pistol cracked, far down the road, and a faint yell came shrilling through the quiet sunshine, they craned their necks till their muscles ached.

Like a summer sand storm they came, and behind them clattered their body-guard, the dust concealing horse and rider alike. Whooping encouraging words at random, they waited. A black nose shot out from the rushing cloud—that was Flopper. Beside it a white streak, a flying, silvery mane, Glory was running! Happy Jack gave a raucous yell of sheer relief.

Lifting reluctantly, the dust gave hazy glimpses of a long, black body hugging jealously close to earth, its rider lying low upon the straining neck—that was Flopper and Bert.

Close beside, a sheeny glimmer of red, a tossing fringe of white, a leaning, wiry, exultant form above—that was Glory and his master.

There were groans as well as shouting when the whirlwind had swept on down the hill, and the reason thereof was plain. Glory had won by a good half length.

Bert Rogers said something savage and set his weight again the bit till Flopper, snorting and disgusted—for a horse knows when he is beaten—took shorter leaps, stiffened his front feet and stopped, turned and walked dejectedly back to the fence, his head hanging shamefacedly.

Glory sailed on down the road, scattering Mrs. Jenson's chickens and jumping clean over a lumbering, protesting sow.

"Come on—he's going t' set up the

drinks," shouted some one, and the crowd leaped, as one man, from the impromptu grand stand and followed.

But Glory did not stop. He whipped around the saloon, whirled by the blacksmith shop, and headed for the mouth of the lane before anyone understood. Then Chip, grasping intuitively the situation, stood in his stirrups and yelled:

"He's broke the bit—it's a runaway!"

Then began the second race, a free-for-all dash up the lane. At the very start they knew it was hopeless to attempt such a thing as overtaking that red streak, but they galloped a mile for good manners' sake.

Then Cal, who was riding between Bert Rogers and Chip, drew rein.

"No use," he said, "Glory's headed for home, and we ain't got the papers t' stop him. Dance opens up at six, and I've got a girl in town."

"Same here," grinned Bert. "It's after four now."

Chip, who hadn't a girl—and didn't want one either, let Silver out for another long gallop, seeing it was Weary. Then he, too, gave up the chase and turned back.

Glory settled to a long lope and kept steadily on, gleefully rattling the broken bit that dangled beneath his jaws. Weary, helpless and amused, sat unconcerned in the saddle and laid imaginary bets with himself on the outcome.

Without doubt Glory was headed for home. Weary figured that, barring accidents, he could catch up Blazes, who was in the little pasture, and ride back to Dry Lake by the time the dance was in full swing—for the dancing before dark would be desultory.

But the gate into the big field was closed and tied securely with rope. Glory comprehended the fact with one roll of his beautiful eyes, and turned away to the left, where the trail wound like a snake into the foothills.

Clinging warily to the level where choice was given him, trotting where the way was rough, mile after mile he covered till even Weary's patience showed signs of weakening. Just then Glory turned where a gate lay flat upon

the ground, and galloped stiffly up to the very steps of a squat, vine-covered ranch house where, like the discontented pendulum, he "suddenly stopped."

"Damn you, Glory, I could kill you for this," murmured Weary, and slid reluctantly from the saddle.

The place seemed deserted, but it was not. There was a girl.

The girl lay in a hammock; *sprawled*, I came near saying. She had some magazines scattered around upon the porch, and her hair was down. She was dressed in a blue skirt and what, to Weary's untrained, masculine eye, looked like a pink gunny sack. It was, in reality, a very dainty kimono.

Weary's eyes were keen as well as handsome. He had discovered the girl immediately, and it was that same discovery which gave him a thirst for Glory's blood.

The girl seemed asleep. Weary saw a chance of leading Glory quietly to the corral before she awoke. Then he could borrow another bridle and ride back whence he came, and he could explain the thing to Joe Meeker in town. Joe was always good about lending things, anyway.

He gathered the fragments of the bit in one hand and clucked under his breath, in an agony lest his spurs should jingle.

Glory turned upon him his beautiful, brown eyes, dewy with reproach.

Weary pulled steadily. Glory stretched neck and nose obediently, but as to feet, why they were down to stay.

Weary glanced anxiously toward the hammock and perspired.

Then he stood back and whispered language it would be a sin to repeat. Glory listened with unruffled calm, and stood perfectly still.

The face of the girl was hidden under one round, loose-sleeved arm. She did not move, although the faint breeze, freshening in spasmodic puffs, seized upon the hammock and set it swaying gently.

"Oh, damn you, Glory," whispered Weary most fervently. But Glory was accustomed to being damned and displayed absolutely no interest.

Taking his hat—his best hat—he beat, struck, cuffed and otherwise maltreated the head of that cayuse, forgetful that many dollars, which Glory had won for him, awaited his gathering from the pockets in Dry Lake. He did it all silently, except for the soft thud of felt on flesh. Glory had been belabored with worse things than a soft, gray hat during his eventful career in Arizona. He laid back his ears, shut his eyes tight and stood still.

There came a gasping gurgle from the hammock, and Weary's hand was arrested in midair. The girl's head was burrowed in a pillow and her slippers tapped the floor while she laughed and laughed.

Weary delivered a parting whack and put on his hat, and from his face, he seemed in doubt whether to laugh or swear. He could nearly always see the funny side of things, however, if there was one, so he grinned sheepishly. In a minute it all came over him at once, and he sat down upon the porch and laughed till he came near crying.

Then the girl showed signs of recovery.

"Oh, gee, but it was too funny!" she gasped, sitting up and wiping her eyes.

Weary gasped also, though it was a small matter—a common little word of three letters. In all the verbal messages he had received, it was the precise, school-grammar wording of them which had irritated him most. That is where the boys had shown so much finesse—in the wording of the messages.

Weary mopped his face on a white, silk handkerchief and wondered.

"You aren't a train robber, or—anything, are you?" she asked with another gurgle. "You seemed rather upset at finding the place wasn't deserted—though I'm sure, if you're a robber running away from the sheriff, I'd never dream of standing in your way. Please make yourself at home."

Weary turned his head and looked straight at her.

"You don't appear to remember me, Miss Satterly. Sorry I'm not a train robber, if that's what you were looking for. I'm just Will Davidson, better

known as Weary Willie—better yet as Weary. We've met before."

The girl eyed him attentively, frankly puzzled.

"Maybe we have—if you say so. I'm a wretched hand at remembering strange names and faces. Was it at a dance? I meet so many fellows at dances——" she waved a hand and smiled deprecatingly.

"Yes," said Weary, laconically, "it was."

The girl studied his profile.

"I remember now—it was at the St. Patrick's ball in Dry Lake! You——"

"It was not. I wasn't at that dance at all." Weary fanned his hot cheeks with his hat, and gazed away into space.

Miss Satterly, thinking she had offended him—as she had—blushed.

"Well, it's horrid of me, I know. But you see, at dances, especially among strangers, one doesn't think of the men individually—they're just good or bad partners. It resolves itself into a question of feet. Now, if I should dance with you again—did I dance with you?"

Weary shot a quick, eloquent glance in her direction.

"Well, I guess yes," he drawled, and Miss Satterly blushed again.

"I was going to say, if I should ever dance with you again, I'd remember you perfectly."

"I can't dance with these boots on," grinned Weary, "or I'd try and identify my feet here on the porch. I guess you'll have to take my word for it for the present."

"Oh, I will. Now, why aren't you in town, celebrating? I thought I was the only unpatriotic person in the country."

"I just came from town," said Weary, choosing his words carefully. No man likes to own to a woman that he has been run away with. "I—er—broke my bridle, back a few miles"—it was fifteen, if it were one—"and so I rode in here to get one of Joe's. I didn't want to bother anybody, but Glory thought this was where he got off."

Miss Satterly laughed again.

"It was funny—you tried to be so still about it. Is he balky?"

"He was, at that particular time. He's anything that happens to strike him as dev—mean."

"Well, I think you better lead him to the corral—if he'll go—and let him rest a while. You must have ridden him unmercifully. And I'll make a pitcher of fresh lemonade and give you some cake—seeing I'm to take your word that we're acquainted."

Fresh lemonade sounded tempting, after that ride. And Mrs. Meeker was a famous cook, and—who can fathom the mind of man? Weary laid his hand upon the bridle and Glory, having done what mischief he could, walked meekly away beside his master. At the corral gate Weary looked back.

"At dances one doesn't consider men as individuals—one remembers them by their feet. Thought I was a train robber—oh, mamma!"

He pulled the saddle off with a pre-occupied air and rubbed Glory down mechanically. After that he went over and sat down on the oats box and smoked two cigarettes, the while he pondered many things.

I can't tell you his thoughts, but I can tell you what he did. He stood up, brushed sundry bright sorrel hairs from his coat sleeves, stooped and tried to pinch a crease into each knee of his trousers, which showed symptoms of bagging, took off his hat and polished it with the sleeve he had just brushed so carefully, pinched four big dimples in the crown, and placed it upon his head at a studiously unstudied angle, slapped old Glory affectionately on the flank, and narrowly escaped having his head kicked off. Then he swung off up the path, softly whistling "In the good old summer time."

And the old hen, hovering her chicks in the shade of the hay rack, eyed him more distrustfully than at first, and cried "krr-r-r-r!" at him in a shocked tone that sent her chickens burrowing deeper under her feathers.

Miss Satterly had changed her pink kimono for a fetching white shirt-waist, and had fluffed her hair into a coil on top of her head. Weary thought she looked very nice.

"I thought you had stolen away over the hill," she greeted him.

Weary laughed light-heartedly. "I never ran away from a good thing yet," he responded, and sat down with the air of one who felt at peace with his surroundings.

Miss Satterly could make excellent lemonade, he discovered, and she proved herself a very entertaining young woman. An hour did not seem half as long as it should be. He found himself telling her all about the race, and she helped him to reckon his winnings, which was not easy to do, since he had taken varied chances, and covered every bet offered him, and could scarcely remember them all. With the aid of the schoolma'am he found that, if Glory had not run and won, he would have been just three hundred and sixty-five dollars to the bad. She said he was horribly reckless to gamble like that, and it was a mercy he didn't lose—though without doubt he needed chastening.

After that matter was settled, he learned that Miss Satterly had remained at home to enjoy the luxury of a whole day to herself, a day in which she could read, or sleep, or just lie in the hammock and take solid comfort.

"And I came and broke into your bunch of quiet and stampeded the solid comfort," finished Weary for her, looking at the white shirt-waist and at the coiled hair.

"Oh, I'd had enough by that time," she laughed. "I was beginning to wish I had gone to the dance."

"There's time enough yet," suggested Weary, insinuatingly.

"Ye-s, but—"

"Don't you think we're well enough acquainted?"

"Well, you know we aren't exactly old friends."

"We will be," declared Weary with considerable emphasis. "Would you go if I was—well, say your brother?"

Miss Satterly rested her chin in her palms and regarded him reflectively.

"Brothers usually take some other fellow's sister, don't they? I never had one myself—except, that is, three or

four that I—er—adopted, at one time or another. I've heard that the real thing is different." She smiled demurely up at him.

Weary made a mental note for the benefit of Cal Emmett. "Darling brother" was a myth, then. He might have known it all along. And if that were a myth, why so was all the rest of it—except, of course, the schoolma'am herself; she was a very present—and pleasant—reality. Oh, the things he would do to that gang!

"Well, what are you grinning about?" demanded she, abruptly, and Weary put away revengeful thoughts.

"I was wondering if you wouldn't adopt *me*, so we could go to the dance. It's a cinch you would go with an adopted brother. You know you'd trot right along and have a good time. Beside," he added, artfully, when he saw signs of relenting, "it's a sin to waste the music they've got; a harp, two mandolins and a violin. It's out of sight; there's no getting around it—we ought to be there using it."

"Meekers have taken both rigs," objected she, weakly.

"I noticed a side saddle hanging in the stable. I can easy rustle a cayuse to put it on."

"I'd ruin a dancing dress, riding. You surely wouldn't want me to blow in upon them in a sateen riding skirt, would you?"

"That wouldn't bother *me* any, so you went. What's the matter of tying up your dancing togs in a bundle. The way Glory and I'd carry 'em in for you wouldn't be slow."

"I expect it wouldn't," retorted the schoolma'am, and relapsed into silence, dallying with temptation.

"Well," she said at last, "I hereby adopt you as a well meaning, useful sort of brother—and I'll go. *It would* be creepy staying here alone, anyway. That chunky little gray in the pasture is the horse I ride. I'll be ready by the time you are—now hike."

She was ready when he rode up to the house leading the little gray, and came down from the porch with a large, flat pasteboard box in her arms.

"Don't get off to help me," she commanded. "I can mount from the ground very easily. Take this box—it's going to be awkward to carry, I'm afraid, but it was the best I could do."

Weary took the box and prudently remained in the saddle. Glory, having the man he did for master, was unused to the flutter of a woman's skirts around his feet, and rolled his eyes till the whites showed all around. Moreover, he wondered what was that big, white thing in Weary's arm.

He stood quite still until the schoolma'am was settled to her liking in the saddle and had tucked her skirt down over the toe of her right foot. He watched the proceeding from the tail of his eye with much interest, as did Weary. Then he walked sedately from the yard, cantered through the sand of the creek bottom and up the slope beyond, till he felt Weary draw a long breath of relief, when he immediately thrust his nose between his white front feet, and entered his little protest against the arrangements. Encumbered as he was with the ball gown, Weary could only cling and pray for deliverance.

"Oh, gee," cried the schoolma'am, under stress of deep feeling. "Give me the box!"

But Weary couldn't. Already he was halfway to the gate, the box tightly clasped under one arm, and his coat standing straight out behind.

The little gray was no race horse, but his wind was good, and with urging he kept the fleeing Glory in sight for a mile or more. Then, horse and rider were briefly silhouetted against the sunset as they topped a distant hill, dipped quickly over the crest and were seen no more, and the schoolma'am rode by faith, in great mental distress over her gown, which was a new one.

At the gate which led into the big field she overtook them. Glory was nibbling a frayed end of the rope, and Weary, the box balanced across the saddle in front of him, was smoking a cigarette.

"Well," said the schoolma'am, rather tartly, "is this a hare and tortoise race?"

Weary shook his head as one who despairs of solving a puzzle.

"Miss Satterly," he began, deprecatingly, "Glory and I ain't used to escorting young ladies. We're accustomed to getting right out and burning the earth when we want to go anywhere."

"I see," said the schoolma'am, laconically. Then she added, quite as if she meant it, "If it hadn't been for my new dress, I'd have gone back home."

"It's a good thing I've got it, then," said Weary, placidly. "I'm going to take it to the dance. You can come along and wear it, if you want to—but I tell you right now this dress is going, if I have to wear it myself."

The schoolma'am laughed, which was what Weary wanted, and the air cleared.

"Let's be going, then," she said, glancing significantly to the purplish glow where the sun had been.

"That's as Glory says," sighed Weary, gathering up the reins. "He seems t' be head push, to-day. Coming out I didn't have a bit in his mouth at all. Going in I've got one of Joe Meeker's teething rings. It wouldn't hold a pet turkey. Please trot along to town with Miss Satterly and me, Glory."

Glory put up his ears and considered the matter, turned at the familiar touch of the reins on his back, and ambled decorously away toward town beside the little gray.

There was consternation among the members of the Happy Family when Weary walked calmly in with the schoolma'am, all in shimmery white, beside him.

Cal edged over to where Chip stood leaning against the wall in the corner.

"D'yuh see that, Chip?" Chip nodded. "Old Weary's too many for me," he said. "The chances are he's been running her all along, on the side."

"She's a swell looker, in white, ain't she?" remarked Cal.

"I'd tell a man," said Chip. "If I'd a-thought he'd play us a trick like that—"

Weary grinned significantly at them as he whirled the schoolma'am by the corner in their first waltz.

THE SOCIAL SIDE OF NEW YORK*

IN WHICH A LEADER OF SOCIETY TELLS
THE TRUTH ABOUT IT

THE writer on New York society is at once met by the discouraging truth that almost every general assertion concerning any one portion of it is utterly inaccurate in regard to any other. It is so vast and so heterogeneous that these adjectives seem to be the only ones applicable to the whole.

"New Yorkers are so formal," says one critic, "their dinner invitations are sent out five weeks ahead."

"New Yorkers are so casual," says another, "they ask each other to dine through their butlers at the telephone."

And both statements are true. Here, as ever, ignorance is the father of the general assertion. People who tell us that New Yorkers are not cultivated have simply never mingled with that group, who, precious and intellectual as Boston's own, and perhaps numerically as large, represent an important phase of New York society.

In the same way Philadelphians are fond of saying that we have no love of sport and the outdoor life; and in saying so, must, it seems, be thinking of the island of Manhattan, forgetting the little communities of New Yorkers in Westchester or Long Island. Just as we include the populations of many foreign towns, so we represent many social ideas. The result is an elusive one to commit to print.

Not only are all these sets numerous and unstable, but, still more confusing, they are made up on no discernible principle. Even the composition of the so-called "Four Hundred" defies explana-

tion. The newspapers delight to represent it as a glittering, godless plutocracy, in which money is not only requisite but all-powerful.

We must confess that among its members the poorly off are in the minority, and that for the most part it is made up of the rich, headed by the candid lady who feels "most sorry for people who have fifty thousand a year; they are so apt to think they can live like really rich people." But to admit this is not to admit that money is the single attribute considered, the only link that holds these people together. For evidently some of our richest men are not in it, while not a few of less than moderate means are included. An unprejudiced observer cannot help suspecting that the frequent charges that no one can get into this set without money is made by those who prefer to lay their own failure to their circumstances rather than to more personal disabilities. One must undoubtedly have enough money to have clothes to wear to their parties and cabs to take one thither, but one must above all be an agreeable enough person to be asked, and it is in the latter qualification, I think, that the hitch most often occurs.

But to return to the subject of the composition of this most conspicuous of cliques. If it is not controlled by money, what is it controlled by? Not brain. Here is no homogeneity. One sits at dinner between the president of a university and a stupid, callow youth. Certainly not similarity of principles and point of view. The Sunday bridge

*This is the first in a series of important articles on social life in American cities to be published in AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE throughout the present year. An article on Boston will appear in the July number, to be followed by articles on the social side of such representative cities as St. Louis, Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco and New Orleans.—THE EDITORS.

player, and the lady who never drives, even to church, on Sunday, are the best of friends. To the outsider there is no discernible difference between the lady who moved out of her house when her children had scarlet fever, not, as she explained, because she was afraid, but because she had so many dinner engagements she could not break; and the lady who never accepts anything that could interfere with her lunching with her children. Certainly the explanation is not to be found in ancient lineage—one had almost forgotten the possibility. The names of old New Yorkers are nothing now, unless perhaps a vague discomfort to the newcomers.

This state of affairs, if one stops to think, is really very curious. That a set of people so close, so difficult of access should present no fixed principle on which it is made up is something that requires an explanation; and many have been suggested by social essayists, looking usually more to the individual than to the general conditions. For my part I think the whole situation is to be explained as the result of very much the same circumstances that are affecting all phases of American life, academic, commercial or social.

New York society is congested, like the traffic on Fifth Avenue—only so far the mounted policeman has not made his appearance. There is much—too much—of much too good things; too many pleasant people, too much good music, too many good clothes, too many superlatively delightful parties. Comparison is wiped out. Everything is of the best. Only one thing is not lavishly obtainable—Time.

This is the source of all the complaints brought against us by outsiders; for it is noticeable that it is always by outsiders that complaints are brought. New York seems to suit New Yorkers to a nicety. I have known Bostonians on whose nerves Boston produced so unfortunate an effect that they could never bring themselves to return there. I have seen sons of Chicago settled very contentedly in other places. But I have yet to see the New Yorker—I speak in all open-mindedness—who lives any-

where else in this country from choice. One does find them sometimes in Europe. New York is closely allied with foreign life, but for the most part New Yorkers can picture nothing more desperate, more pitiful than to be obliged to leave their native town. All the complaints against it have not shaken their love of it.

Strangers, on the other hand, have rarely anything pleasant to say, in spite of their constant presence here. So violent are their denunciations that they often appear to be tinged by sensitive and neglected egotism; so hard is it for the great man of a small place to realize he is only a little man in a large one.

Here again the element of time, or rather of its lack, is to be considered. One of the favorite charges against New Yorkers is that they are inhospitable; that having received courtesy in some smaller city, they are apt to forget it when their late hosts visit the metropolis. There is undoubtedly justice in the charge, and yet how are ladies who are never in their own houses during the daylight hours to entertain their acquaintances there? Or how can they, engaged six weeks ahead, find an evening for people who are to be perhaps two weeks in town? The answer that they could find time if they wanted to is true enough, but what a fabulous amount of wanting would be implied! Ladies who see their children passing through the halls, and their husbands in the carriage going out to dinner, and their mothers only when the old lady is brisk enough to drop in before eleven, can scarcely be expected to put the stars in a passion in order to get a glimpse of a casual stranger, who once asked them to dine in another city.

They might, you say, give up one of their engagements; but consider what you are asking them to give up; a musical to hear the world's great artists, or a dinner with a semi-royalty—always something too good to sacrifice, something which it would be a lifelong regret to have missed.

You will say that this is taking the whole subject with ridiculous gravity.

Perhaps, but this is the way it is taken by the country, and this is the way it is taken by the press. It is not very remarkable, therefore, since the social game is both difficult and rewarding, if the people who play it take it seriously, too. As a matter of fact their seriousness over things social is nothing compared to the seriousness of the "provinces." I have seen a small town achieve greater solemnity over a euchre party than a New York hostess would attain over the ball of the season; she would not have time.

Of course the question arises how, if time is so precious, so rare, have so many people had enough of it at their disposal to be able of a sudden to spend so many of the twenty-four hours at bridge, and this without any perceptible difference in the arrangement of the universe, without—like the effect of the archbishop's famous curse—anyone appearing "one penny the worse?" Husbands seem no more neglected; children no worse brought up; households no more deserted; and yet a large part of the feminine contingent of society gives up all day and some of the evening and night to this new occupation.

Cynics find here a serious arraignment of such peoples' former activities, since nothing appears to have suffered by their neglect. But I prefer to think that things have somewhat changed as a result. For instance, how entirely the situation has changed in regard to paying formal visits. A few years ago, though one never counted on finding anyone at home between three and five, one did now and then get in at a house whose owner had forgotten to "leave word that she was out." Certainly the occupation of the elderly, and the socially virtuous, was to drive about all the afternoon and every afternoon leaving cards.

But bridge has altered all that. Bridge luncheons breaking up just in time for five o'clock tea have cut out the card-leaving habit. Nowadays if we pay our dinner visits we are doing well. It seems almost as if the respect for the little engraved pasteboard had suffered, for even the mails do not

bring us the same flood that it used to, and we seem more likely to drop all such forms than to follow the custom I hear is prevailing in England, of furnishing the stationer who prints the cards with a list of those to whom they should, in the course of the winter, be sent.

This is another aspect of New York society that peculiarly irritates the outsider—that we never see each other, that it is the mark of a "provincial" ever to be at home. It is quite true, and the answer is to be found above. We have no time. It is not that we do not want to see our friends, but that, in order to get to the point of seeing them, we have to wait so very much. When we do get there we ask them to dine in a month or six weeks. So friendship progresses.

For my own part I cannot see that this state of affairs is so unfortunate. If you want the quiet life certainly do not seek it in New York. But if you want to amuse yourself, you could not do better, as our constant stream of visitors attests. We are not over polite, we are not perhaps even very agreeable; we lay no special claim to culture, or indeed to anything except a certain social expertness which we do obtain—an expertness beside which the product of any other city appears inept; and, above all, we do amuse ourselves.

In old times we used to hear the expression "social obligations." You never hear it now. No one seems to have any obligation but to be amused. There is a newspaper theory that smart women spend their days at women's luncheons and teas. They do nothing of the kind. Teas are attended by the strugglers looking for an opportunity, by the old-fashioned, and by *débutantes*. I cannot affirm by what unfortunates women's luncheons are attended, except by those who are not sufficiently important, or sufficiently agreeably mated, to be asked to dinner.

Smart women skate, ride, automobile, go to the theater, play bridge, even, perhaps, indulge in a serious occupation, but they do nothing that does not amuse them. I should correct myself, nothing

that they do not *expect* to amuse them. They don't of course see much of their families and nothing of their friends, for they have no time to make new ones, nor to keep up with the old. And yet now and then when they do run across some one with whom they were brought up, some one who has been living within a block, some one whom they have not seen for five years, how affecting is the meeting! How surprise is mingled with joy, as if seas, streets, had separated them.

But where our lack of time is really a serious matter, is in our attitude toward aspirants to social admission. That these must be judged more or less on appearance is understandable, but that they must be judged on their *first* appearance is really deplorable. Yet no one has time to give them a second chance; they are hurried from the center of the stage by other performers. The consequence is not hard to see. If they can have only one hearing, they try by every means to get outside testimony to the judge's ears—to be, in other words, talked about. To be conspicuous in some way is their only hope.

Of course a difficulty sometimes arises in knowing when one has become conspicuous. Two gentlemen who might fairly lay claim to distinction—one, the acknowledged head of the bar; the other, the most widely read of our novelists—were once placed at dinner on each side of a certain great lady—a position given to her as being the seat of honor. She was, however, heard to complain loudly after dinner that "it was hardly worth while to put on one's good clothes and go out to dine, if one had to sit between men one had never heard of." The gentlemen made the mistake of being a little too great. This is an error into which the social aspirant does not often fall. He recognizes that, as some one has rather disagreeably said, it is better to drive zebras to your victoria than to have every Christian virtue; one sees the zebras, or if by any bad luck one does not see them, one hears of them.

An old lady who would be admitted by everyone to be the possessor of social influence, who prides herself on keeping

up with the times, complained the other day of a young protégée of hers that she was a dear girl, but that she would never be very successful; "she had not the art of getting herself talked of in the papers." Now this tendency is more than wicked, it is vulgar. It is more than shocking, it is unwise. It is of course the old problem of free competition, just at the point where circumstances keep it from being free. It is the problem of securing the nomination. After this, the methods of election are tolerably fair.

The clever social aspirant under present conditions should, I think, take advantage of the spirit of restlessness in this inner circle—the only weak point in the armor of their self-confidence. They know they are better dressed, better fed, better supplied with formal entertainments, but the question does sometimes occur to them whether, after all, they are better amused. Whether there is not a group of people in their own city, gayer, more light-hearted, poorer perhaps, but more to be envied. There is something almost pathetic in the way in which the so-called "crowned heads" will grasp at any hope of attaining this enchanted ground.

Many of those of humbler means who cannot afford champagne and terrapin and game out of season, hesitate to ask to their parties those who seem never to have anything else. Yet I am sure that anyone who had the courage to give them Irish stew and beer, and make them wash up their own dishes, might, with a little tact, be considered the most successful hostess of the season. And after all it is not surprising. The clerk who goes downtown in the Elevated would like to try an automobile, but I have known ladies to find, when their automobiles broke down in remote avenues, the most delightful excitement in returning home in the unfamiliar trolley. We have all probably heard of the magnificent lady who, when forced into such a position, turned, at the approach of the conductor, to her neighbor to ask: "I beg your pardon, but what does one give the man?"

Without, however, being able to hope

to receive so pure a sensation as hers must have been, we all enjoy variety in one form or another.

There is indeed a constant tendency on the part of the different sets to mingle—the best of each set, I mean. It is the old desire to see the world, to see life under different aspects. We are all aware that we are not complete. The smart hanker after the amusing, and the amusing after the smart. Even the old families create some mild envy in the breasts of those who have found it wiser to forget their parents; while the bearer of a historic name would gladly exchange it for the position of the *nouveau riche*, which he is supposed to despise. No matter what division we belong to we are too idealistic, too ambitious, to be entirely content.

So much for the working of the democratic spirit. When we decreed that we should have no aristocracy, no law of primogeniture to forbid the dividing up of our great fortunes with every generation, we decreed also, although we did not know it, that no social position should be assured.

Nobody—one almost trembles to make such an assertion, remembering certain august names—is so sure of a position in society as to dare entirely to cease to struggle for it. Many people will contradict me, pointing to this or that example, but their examples will always be alike, examples of those who have preferred to allow themselves to drift in dignity into some back eddy of the social stream; they will not be in

the main current. Just because our society is founded on no principle of aristocracy, or money, no one can feel confident of occupying, to-morrow, the position so manifestly his own to-day. Social advancement is not a question of income or of inheritance, or of political influence, or of beauty or wit. It is a question of supplying to the right people the right sort of social pleasure. The people change, the demand changes; the hostesses must change, too. To this we owe the restlessness, the effort, the lack of repose on which foreigners so inevitably comment. But we owe it also to the fact that our society is a living, moving thing, that we have no archaic survivals, no round of duties to people we have outgrown.

It is by this quality, it seems to me, that New York society must be judged, and must stand or fall. We have here the very best. Be your taste for riches, or brains, or music, or books, or automobiles, or pictures, we have them all in a high degree of excellence. That is why our town is crowded with strangers. But we, or our circumstances, have made all these things difficult of access to the outsiders. That is why the outsider clamors against New York. We are, socially speaking, self-supporting. We often like strangers, but we can never need them. That is why we are called inhospitable. New York's best is very hard to get at, and those who have missed it find comfort in telling each other that it does not exist.

MORNING

TO the valley-meadow came the day:
Where the night-long shadow deepest lay,
Low the clouds were leaning, till a lark
Woke to tell the meaning of the dark.

FLORENCE D. SNELLING.

NIGHT AND TIME

By William Watson

ON a gray city I looked down where strove
Britain with Rome, and Saxon warred with Dane,
And faith to faith succeeded, fane to fane;
Where haply shrined in immemorial grove,
Some god of dayspring faded before Jove;
Where Jove to Christ, where Christ's to Odin's reign,
Did yield; and Odin bowed to Christ again;
And each a darkness round a darkness wove.

And Silence was abroad, and Dreams went by;
And hearthfires paled and faltered and died out,
As dying gods had paled to ghosts and fled;
And a blar mist came slowly up like Doubt;
And there was only Night, and Time, and I,
And city upon city of the dead.

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AN ADDED STARTER

By Martha McCulloch-Williams

Author of "Next to the Ground," Etc.

FATE never yet set herself a wicked-woman problem, whose solution was occult.

It is your weak woman who is esoteric, forever darkening counsel and making prophecy vain. Wicked women, despite infinite variety, are always definable qualities. Since they can be reckoned, they can likewise be reckoned with.

Far otherwise with the weak sisterhood. Who so undertakes reckoning with them sets himself a task beyond human powers.

Eulalie Trent was so big and beautiful, so spoiled, so spirited, so full withal of gay and gracious *hauteur*, nobody suspected her soul-weakness, least of

all her husband, Cranston Trent. He also was big—very nearly as overgrown as his fortune, with baby yellow hair, in ridiculous contrast to his stature, and the kindest merry blue eyes.

His fortune had come out of the Street. Prudent people said it was enough to make old John Trent turn in his grave—the way his son and heir was wasting money coined from his father's heart's blood, upon the race tracks in horses and wagers. But the cynics accounted Cranston wise. He was bound, they said, to lose his money some way—he lacked wholly the commercial instinct, and shrank inexpressibly from the corners, squeezes, and turns of the market, that are the modern

highly developed, and thoroughly legitimate, substitutes for the old pastime of piracy.

Since he needs must lose his money, better get runs for it. The runs gave him thrills, cheap at any price. Furthermore, he was madly in love, and the flitter and hurly-burly of racing were meat and drink to his pretty wife's vanity.

A sometime blue-grass belle, Eulalie had been bred to divert herself with men and horses. It was her conceit that she knew all there was to be known of both. Then, too, she was devoutly superstitious—so far, all the luck of her life had come through the sport of kings. When she was in short frocks, a yearling, the gift of her bachelor godfather, had sold for a phenomenal price. The money, sacredly kept, formed a snug little dowry.

Then there was Cranston. He had seen her first upon a grand stand, white to the lips, her eyes glued to a field glass, her breast heaving, her teeth set, as a dozen young things, finer than the silk they carried, tore down a straight-away, and a groaning roar broke from the massed throng below; for a rank outsider, running around a big field, nipped the favorite on the post, and won the richest prize of the year.

After the winning Eulalie was a figure of rosy and radiant pride. Had she not picked the winner as he paraded past? True she had chosen him because she happened to wear that day some touch of his colors—but nothing would ever convince her that her morning's choice of ribbons was not providential.

It seemed all the more providential after she met Cranston. His blond comeliness, his easy laugh, took her heart by storm. She had been always shrewdly avaricious, appraising suitors with the nicest balancing, but this time she flung judgment to the winds. She knew Cranston was rich—still it is but just to her to say, the gold of his hair was infinitely more precious in her eyes than all the minted metal his name represented. Of course she did not fling herself openly at his head—but it is not too much to say that when three months

later she went out of church as his wife, he was truly the captive of her bow and spear.

For six months her devotion endured—then, insensibly, perhaps from seeing what they could achieve and supply, she came to dreaming more of the Trent millions than of their master. But since she had wit and breeding enough to keep the dreams well hidden, as she was, moreover, never dull, sullen, nor mopy, long before the tour ended Cranston had slipped to her feet, and worshiped her so abjectly, his chief thought was to give her pleasure.

Although she had come thus witlessly to her woman's kingdom, Eulalie, regnant, was a figure of delight. In New York, to which after a while they came back, Eulalie was a stranger. She was content to remain almost unknown for six months, looking about her the while with very wide-open eyes. She meant to conquer, to lead, even to rule the gay world—by and by. As a means to the end of ruling, she soon decided it was necessary to be first and foremost in something—it did not matter what.

For a while her choice hung evenly balanced between charity, and a racing stable. The stable won, because she felt that thoroughbreds made a more picturesque background for her radiant beauty than East Side waifs, or even the heathen. Then, too, the charitable set was so much less decorative than the smart racing contingent. There was a new Trent palace already building, its interiors ravished from another palace crumbling over-sea. Eulalie wanted guests for it who would not be out of drawing—gay, and sprightly folk to show in high relief against the age-old splendors that somehow breathed still of time and death.

There you have the genesis of the Trent racing stable. Its first season was notable indeed. Almost weekly the public prints had Mr. and Mrs. Cranston Trent at full length, exploited as buying horses at record prices, or winning or losing astounding wagers. Between the lines readers were given to understand that the guiding mind of it was really Mrs. Trent, albeit through

her gentlewoman's dislike of publicity, she kept in the background. Other columns showed their country places—up in Westchester and on Long Island. There were also snapshots of the Trent coach, Mrs. Trent in the box seat, as representing the cream of society's cream. Society with the capital letter, of course. If the columns were not strictly truthful, all the worse for society. Certainly the Trents were enormously fit—it had few butterflies, more richly, or more spectacularly gilded.

When the racing season ended, Cranston Trent had spent half a million to win less than twenty thousand, in plate and purses. He was further many thousands to the bad upon the betting side, and moreover at heavy cost and charges for the care and keeping of his high-priced animals. Several had cost him more than their weight in silver—and then failed even to earn their oats.

But he had no thought of grumbling. He liked his mild consequence as a prominent owner, also the contact it gave him with men the world stared at. But the deep roots of his satisfaction struck apart from that. His stable had made Eulalie rapturously happy—and it had given him the friendship of Ellis Verdray.

Verdray was slight, and dark, and shortish—dwarfish indeed compared to Trent. Their fathers had been firm friends, but ten years' difference in age had kept the sons apart until both were a long way past man's estate. Verdray had likewise inherited money—the most part of it had slipped through his fingers, but still he went the pace. Indeed he could not well help doing it—society of a certain sort, made him its autocrat. He was greatly run after—by men as well as women. The women found his silence more fascinating than other's men's speech. It was only among men that he talked freely. He had been everywhere, and done nearly everything, but never vaunted himself on the strength of it, nor made himself the hero of his own stories.

It was early autumn when he began to get chummy with Cranston. All win-

ter he came as near ignoring Eulalie as courtesy permitted. It was no affectation, rather honest indifference that first piqued, then puzzled her. She thought she knew men in all their moods and tempers—here was an open challenge to her insight, no less than her fascinations. So she began to speculate deeply about him—and ended by setting him on the pedestal from which Cranston, poor fellow, had all unconsciously fallen.

If she had not been self-conscious, desperately anxious to veil her state of feelings, Verdray would have been slower to recognize it. She gave over archness, winsome words and smiles, grew haughty towards him, or carelessly distant, or now and again, in the grip of a peculiarly poignant twinge of affection, positively disdainful.

All that, of course, opened Verdray's eyes. Man of gallantries that he was, steeped, sodden in self-indulgence, his first impulse was to do the right thing by Cranston—all in a whiff he was talking Egypt, Algiers, Persia—any place where the sun shone hot enough to warrant disregard of convention and clothes.

Then cynic fate intervened, making Cranston fall ill, desperately ill, making him also lean on and cling to Verdray in a way so appealing nothing human could withstand it. Verdray stayed by him, putting aside everything but the thought of his need. Eulalie, sobered, chastened, repentantly fond of her husband, he tried hard to look at as the shadow of a shade.

If he failed, who shall judge him? Thus chastened, thus repentantly fond, she touched and stirred him as never in all her panoply of beauty's pride and power. Then she was so honestly grateful to him, so exquisitely tender, so patiently devoted to the sick man. All the best in her rose up to meet the strain.

Spring was so laggard that year, Cranston was ordered away as soon as he was able to travel. Eulalie of course went with him. Equally of course the stable was left in Verdray's oversight. When the Trents came back in the early edge of summer, he had done so well

with it Cranston was nearly at the top, among winning owners.

The fact did more for Cranston than all the tonics. Eulalie vowed he had not really begun to mend until after his triumph in the Highweight. It came among the earliest big events, and Cranston's entry Fair Play, had not only won it easily, but in winning, vanquished Blue Wing, the pride of Jack Berwind's heart. Jack Berwind had the distinction of being Cranston's only enemy—and even he was inherited—he had returned evil for good to old John Trent. The Highweight winnings went into a rope of pearls. It was up at the big Westchester house that Cranston brought them out first, and clasped them about Eulalie's neck, bending over her to kiss her as he did so, and letting his head rest a moment against her soft hair.

"Do you know what day it is?" he asked. "Just four years since I first set eyes on you. Sweetheart, it was a mighty good day—for me. I'm too big and awkward to be sentimental—but I've asked every bead in this string to tell you how I love you, every time it touches your neck."

She sat just inside a French window, facing a side path that led from the lawn to the rose gardens. He felt her tremble within his arms, and lifted her impetuously to his breast. But she slipped from him, shuddering in spite of herself, and said in a dry whisper:

"I—I'm a little giddy this morning. Let me get outside."

The pearl rope fell unheeded among her cushions. Cranston made to follow her, but was stopped by an imperious backward wave of the hand. In a minute more he was glad she had stopped him—Verdray was calling to him from the entrance hall, in tones not to be denied.

"I've come on an errand of charity, Cranny," he said, as Cranston came upon him. "You're a deserving young man, with a wife to support—so I want to give you a piece of a good thing—the best thing of this year—of any year—if we play it right. You know the Flotsam is run to-morrow—my colt Twilight

can win it. He must win it—he has shown me trials in better than record time. And he's dark—dead dark. How I've kept him so, the Lord, or the devil, only knows. I've been backing him—under cover—in the books everywhere since early spring. Eighty, fifty, thirty, twenty to one! Think of it. You can still get aboard at twenty. Take the tip, my son—the last I'll ever give you. However it goes, the Flotsam sees my finish. I dare say you've already guessed I'm pretty near all in—if that black beggar sulks and loses, there's an end of me—if he wins—well! I shall have all I care for—I'm going to chuck the whole thing."

"Play it! I'll burn up the ring. Heaps of loose change here—if I have got a wife to support." Cranston roared joyously. "Illness is cheap—compared to some other things. Lots of dividends came in while I was so near all out. Don't you want to educate a few thousand of them? Might make some more money—though I dare say you've already got all kinds."

"Play or pay yourself," Verdray retorted. "The way I stand, highway robbery would be respectable beside borrowing from a friend. It's different, of course, with the money changers—I'm blessed with remainders and reversions—and they can afford to wait."

"What do you say to a side-bet—I'll give you twenty to one in thousands!" Cranston persisted. Verdray looked at him oddly, and bit his lip. After a breath he shook his head, saying: "Cranny, I can't let you back your generosity against your judgment. I know you want to lose to me—I won't have it. But where's your wife? I'm off at once—bound to catch the next train. Before I go, though, I want to make a bet with her. She thinks she knows horses—says indeed she knows them better than I do. The tongues of men nor angels would ever be able to persuade her that Twilight, whom she has all along disapproved, can really win."

"You'll find her out there," Cranston said, waving his hand toward an open side door. Verdray went through it hastily. Cranston meant to follow

but was hindered by an imperative telephone call. He shouted after Verdray: "Wait! We can go down in the mobe, directly after lunch," then went to hear what his trainer had to say.

Farways, the Cranston place, had truly royal roses, yet Eulalie among them, out-bloomed them all. Her eyes were starry, her cheeks damask-hued.

At last she had come to her kingdom. In Cranston's arms, she had seen Verdray, racing up the side path, stop short, grow white and murderous, then wheel towards the main entrance. He loved her, the knowledge shook her as the wind shakes a reed. She did not want to meet him—she knew she could not veil from him the joy of her eyes. She yearned indeed to be alone with her bliss—her triumph that had come thus when she had given over hope. She hugged it to her soul, and drew in the sweet savor of it as the bodily part of her drew in the perfume of the roses.

They were in full tide of bloom—of lavish midsummer largesse. Here or there about the garden, lightly springing arches held up masses of white flowers intermixed with other masses of true blood red. She stepped under them, reached both arms above her head, and shook down into her lifted face a rain of dropping petals, still damp and fresh with dew.

Framed thus Verdray came upon her. He started ever so little at the sight, and put out a hand as though to steady himself before he spoke her name. He did not so much as touch her hand, although he read clearly enough the invitation of her eyes. Some shreds of honor, of conscience, withheld him. Possibly he was going to take her away from Trent—it all depended. Twilight might lose, after all—although now it seemed impossible. Until the winning or losing was determined, he would do nothing the whole world might not see. And if he won—Eulalie among so much else—he would take her not in the home where he had come a welcome guest, but upon neutral ground.

He had himself well in hand. Beyond that sudden single out-flash there was nothing in face or voice to betray

the passion seething through him. Half banteringly he told her of his great chance, winding up with:

"Now say you don't believe in Twilight—no more than you believe in his master. But I am going to put you to test. Will you back your judgment—for whatever I may name?"

"Why, of course," Eulalie said, trying hard to keep the pain of outraged pride, of wounded love, out of her voice. Why had he searched her out, thus to flout her with everyday affairs! He need not have feared annoyance from her—even though she knew. Automatically she plucked a rose cluster and crushed the red flowers with unnoting cruel fingers.

"What shall it be?" she went on, with the least hard breath. "Cranston will be so pleased——"

"Leave Cranston out of this," Verdray said almost roughly. "This is the wager I want to make on the Flotsam; myself, my belongings, my whole future life, against—your sweet self."

His voice broke over the last word, lingering upon it as though loath to let it go. Eulalie had listened, going white to the lips. She had not dreamed of this—until that telltale quaver she had been steeling her heart to wither him as he deserved. She could not do it. Her eyes fell before his—her hands fell limp at her sides as though she were suddenly stricken. Still Verdray did not touch her. Standing well apart from her he said hoarsely:

"The woman who listens, the castle which parleys—oh, my darling——"

There he broke off suddenly. Cranston, around the next turn of the rose walks, called to them in a curiously weak voice: "Sorry—but after all, Verd, I can't—take you down. Have to go straight to—the track. I hear all sorts of things—about my horses."

Since the Flotsam was a classic event the course was inevitably crowded. So there was nothing out of common in Cranston Trent's decision to go there very early. Eulalie could stay in the club house, or stand in the paddock, holding a sort of court among the grizzled racing enthusiasts. Cranston

looked ill. He had come home very late, and got up so haggard Eulalie's heart smote her hard whenever she looked at him. But once at the track he bustled away from her, seeming somewhat himself.

On the way she had begged him to be careful—he had only patted her hand in reply. His touch haunted her—it was shaken and fevered. Usually his fingers were magnetic—equal to soothing away her headaches. She wanted to be, oh! so kind to him, yet somehow she could not. She seemed to herself possessed, no longer a woman but a thing of steel with electric nerves darting and flashing through it. Her surface consciousness alone took note of Cranston. All that was truly alive in her hung rapt upon the issue of the race.

It was a distance handicap, something over two miles. Twilight was in very well—a four-year-old, he was allotted but a hundred and twelve pounds. The even money favorites, Sky West, and Sail Ho, each shouldered a hundred and twenty-five. Rosy Rue, second choice, picked up a hundred and fifteen despite her sex. The ruck of lightweights, a dozen strong, had imposts ranging from ninety to a hundred and five. Twilight had been trained over an abandoned race course, which Verdray had somehow managed to control. Thus he was strange to the wariest tout, the astutest railbird, and was a long shot, nothing more, until he came out for his preliminary.

He came soberly enough, a midget rider upon his back, lightly holding reins it seemed he had not power to draw. There was no dashing, prancing, curvetting, nothing to show the few wise men who really knew horses, and the mob which fancied itself as wise, that here was a king of the course.

First time around, the walk slid into a canter—insensibly the canter quickened to a stretching dead full run. Still the horse did not seem to be going great guns—he moved so easily, so well within himself, it was only by comparison with other candidates the eye got a full sense of his speed. Then, and then only, the

watchers began recalling that his sire was Handspring, his dam an imported mare tracing to St. Simon, and to set his name running from lip to lip like fire in stubble.

"Twilight, hey!" said the king-pin of all wise men. "Be hanged if he hasn't got a chance, a mighty good chance, to make it all day with the rest. See him move—limber as a greyhound, steady as a clock! Back him certain—all across the board—and shan't grudge the money if he loses——"

"He'll lose right enough—the educated money's all goin' the other way," a second wise man interrupted. The first speaker nodded emphatically. "Yes—but I've heard of such things as—over-education," he said, then hurried away, amid the laugh that followed, to put down a thousand with a gleeful bookmaker, who had already begun chalking up four to five against Sky West and Sail Ho.

"Hello! One, two—five scratches, and an added starter," somebody commented, scanning the blackboard through a glass. "How the deuce does that happen? Beldame! Her trainer told n.e. only yesterday, she was to be saved, and pointed specially for the Pomona, in August."

"How'll the odds go, now?" an elbow neighbor asked. The other looked darkly wise.

"If Beldame happens to be just right—on edge, and willing to try, its simoleons to cinders, she'll land the Flotsam—but that if, let me tell you, is a mighty big one."

"I can't understand it—her runnin' at all. I always bet on her—and all but five dollars is up on the others," a fat man said fretfully. Suddenly a big white hand was thrust over his shoulder, clutching a yellow-backed bill.

"Put that on Beldame," said the hand's owner. "My name is Trent—you'll find me in the paddock after the race. Beldame belongs to me——"

Hurrahs, fragmentary but hearty, stopped him—he edged away, followed by all eyes. "Humph! He must want to win the Flotsam mighty bad," one commented.

"Must have bought Beldame since he came—and the price was a stiff one, sure's you're born."

"Well! I wish him luck!" the fat man replied, over his shoulder—he was already worming his way toward the ring. The betting had been of the desultory before-the-event sort. Now that the names were posted, business was in full swing, and the whole space packed with a mob of howling dervishes, each shrieking out the name of a racer.

The slates told the story. With Beldame in, the favorites had gone back to a little better than even money. The mare came next, at two to one—Twilight and Rosy Rue ruled even at threes. Floods of money poured in on all of them. However the race resulted, fortunes would be won and lost there. Towards the last, after the bugle call to post, more than one layer shut up his box, and turned his slate, declining further hazard.

No Flotsam ever run had brought out sightlier paraders. On looks alone, nothing except the other, had a chance to beat either Sail Ho or Sky West; chestnuts both, grandsons of the gallant Hanover, they showed strength, and power, and beauty in every line, from their clean-cut dainty muzzles, and nervous, silken ears, to their quarters of massy muscle, springy pasterns, and firm, elastic hoofs. Both were in fine fettle, and trained to the hour. Their millionaire owners stood to win or lose fabulously. To them, to many of the crowd, the Flotsam was after a manner a duel. The favorites had contended one against the other with equal fortune, ever since the racing season opened. They had won and lost one to another, always by the narrowest margin. Today, equally weighted, equally ready, they faced the opportunity of their careers to show which was the better horse.

Still they did not lead. The ruck of featherweights went mincing and prancing before them. Rosy Rue came next, seeming whimsically to move in time to the rhythm of dropping cheers which greeted her. The favorites, one behind the other, drew the grand stand and club

house veranda alike to their feet. People stood screaming electrically, clapping hands, waving hats and handkerchiefs, as though the race were already run and won.

Twilight, something hulking as to build, brown-black, with white high lights playing over the gloss of his coat, was almost lapped upon the leaders, and held his steadiness in spite of their roaring welcome. Moving slowly he had no looks to boast—it was only when he began to fly, to stretch, to strain, one marked the might of him, the lightning play of muscles beneath the satin coat, the reaching power of the shoulders, the lift of the quarters, muscled like those of a cart horse. His rider was all in white with accents of vivid red.

Beldame, absolutely last, had in her saddle the Trent colors—blue-grass green, slashed and sashed with crimson. Eulalie had chosen them—Eulalie who sat, ague-stricken in soul, as she watched them go past, borne by the big dead-black mare.

Beldame might mean so much—why had Cranston bought her, and started her, thus against all counsel? She had asked it of herself over and over, ever since the name was chalked up. Verdray had not spoken to her—but she had seen him scowl, then whiten, as from the lawn below, he read the chalking.

Beldame was a queen of the turf, and after the manner of queens, erratic. She had downed the best in training, and lost to the worst, always carrying thousands of her owner's money, no less than the dollars of the talent. But she had won so much oftener than she lost, that she got a rousing greeting—a tempest of hurrahs and hand clappings that swelled to the roar of the distant surf.

Cranston Trent flushed a little as he heard it. He was very white, with tired eyes—so white even the flush could not give him the look of health. Still his jaws set firmly—he stood like a statue upon the grass, below Eulalie, not swaying in the least for all the crowding. She had tried to stand beside him, but he would not have it.

"You can see better up there—keep right at the rail," he had said.

Verdray was in sight of both—he had crowded in to the fence at the foot of the lawn, and leaned upon it, apparently deaf and blind to everything about him.

The start, in full sight, was not long delayed. At the third line-up, the barrier lifted, the flag flashed—in the twinkling of an eye the dun ribbon of the course was flecked and brodered with jockeys gorgeous as fairy princes, each urging or holding in a horse as recklessly ready as himself to win or die. Thundering down upon the stand Sail Ho led—he had drawn the inside track, and had the featherweights right at his heels. Rosy Rue came next with Sky West at her saddle skirts, Beldame a length behind, and Twilight absolutely last. He held his head low, and moved almost sleepily. A sort of hushed murmur ran about, when just beyond the quarter pole Beldame fell back to him, rating along with him, neck and neck throughout the first mile. As again the racers swept past the stand, Sky West was first, Sail Ho half a length behind him, and all but two of the featherweights trailing. Rosy Rue ran consistently, neither gaining nor losing. Twilight and Beldame lay back of her, each under wraps, and both evidently wild to go out and make it a runaway race. Gold Ring, a featherweight of substance and quality, bore them company, with her stable mate Pippin, running locked.

"It's anybody's race—yet. Trouble is to know—whose," Beldame's late trainer said at Verdray's elbow. Verdray flashed upon him an angry yet confident glance, then edged a little away, saying through his teeth:

"You have helped on a low trick to beat me—let me tell you now, it will not work. Twilight is bound to win—with yards to spare."

He seemed to speak the truth. The words were hardly out of mouth, when Twilight began truly to run. In a wink he was up with the leaders, had passed them, swept on to the rail, and was running strong and free to inevitable victory. Sail Ho had fallen back hopelessly

beaten, Sky West, struggle as gallantly as he might, could not get his nose past Twilight's streaming tail. Gold Ring and Pippin were two lengths behind—after them Beldame held to the middle of the course instead of trying to get through on the rail.

Thus it went to the head of the straight. A dead, breathless silence held the watching throng. Men grew hollow-eyed, women almost swooned, as Twilight turned into it a length clear of everything, and Sky West's jockey drew his whip. Sky West had Meddler blood—he resented punishment, most times. This time he responded to it, spurting gallantly. But he could do no more than get up to Twilight's flanks. They were coming to the eighth—Twilight would win—win with an impressive lead. A long indrawn, half sobbing breath was evidence of that conviction. It stopped, arrested on the lip, by the happenings on the course.

At long and at last, Beldame was coming to her own. Her rider lay almost prone upon her neck shouting encouragement into her batted ears. Her mouth was open, her eyes blood-shot and rolling angrily. She lay down, down, till she was almost flat on earth, coming up again with the stretch and sweep of a greyhound. On, on, she forged—past Rosy Rue, the beaten favorites, the gallant featherweights, straight on, till she ranged even with Twilight.

Oh, then it was a near thing, beautiful to see! Neck and neck, stride for stride, stretching, straining, hearts thumping, gasping rather than breathing, they devoured the earthen distance, and fought their desperate duel with Fate and Father Time. Fifty yards from home, Twilight got his nose for an eye wink in front—in the next leap Beldame gained as much.

Game as a pebble, gritty as a bulldog, again he tried to best her—with a last convulsive effort, he thrust himself lancewise forward, landed three yards from the wire, staggered, rolled and fell, as Beldame, the erratic, crossed the finish line winner over all else, by five open lengths.

Twilight died where he fell.

"Our hearts broke—together," Verdray said to Eulalie, bidding her good-by. Cranston came up to them, haggard still, but no longer hopeless.

"You'll be wise to stick to what you said about going away," he said, a shade of meaning in his tone. It was characteristic that he affected no compassion for the other man's ruin. "I'm getting out of the game myself," he went on.

"In fact, this is my last racing day. I find it has come near costing me—what I can't afford to lose. I'm stopping while I still have—some things worth saving."

"You are wise—and fortunate," Verdray said, walking away. He knew that Cranston Trent understood, and henceforth would stand at jealous guard over his own.



APPLE PIE

LET others praise the red, red rose,
Whose haunting scent none may forget,
But almost anybody knows
The apple pie is sweeter yet.
Let others sing the damsel fair
Who thralls them with bewitching art—
But apple pie drives off my care
And trips the highway to my heart.
And if it's cold—
Say one day old—
I want all of it I can hold!

When apple pie has held the shelf
Until it's cool and crisp and firm,
I'll eat a whole big one myself
And never murmur—not a murmur!
Why, when it's sliced it fairly smiles,
And chuckles when its honeyed juice
In tantalizing drips beguiles
The cravings that it has set loose.
O, if it's cold—
Say one day old—
I want all of it I can hold!

I think I'd give away my crown,
Were I a man of royal birth,
To eat, while holding upside down,
The last piece of it on this earth!
Why, every summer smile and song
Is held within an apple pie—
And that's the place where they belong,
All peace and dulcetness! O, my!
When it is cold—
Say one day old—
I want all of it I can hold!

W. D. NESBIT.

A DINNER IN THE BOIS

By Mary B. Mullett

THE day was glorious; all Paris out of doors; the city musical with pleasant noises.

There was tinkling of spoons on glasses in front of cafés, snapping of whips, rolling of hoops, fresh little laughs of children, round-eyed before the tents of Guignol.

Such a good old friend the world seemed! The cab drivers smiled as they held up interrogating whips. The very whips quivered as if they said, thrilling the while:

"Don't you want to take a ride? It's heavenly to-day."

And all this time while the city was laughing the afternoon away, Gresham was sulking in the little corner smoking room below stairs—underground, as they say—at the Elysée Palace Hotel. The mutter of wheels outside in the avenue trembled through the quiet place where Gresham shared the solitude with an intermittent waiter, who popped in from time to time, perfunctorily wiped a table and popped out again, quite as if he were a mechanical figure on a clock.

To Gresham the beauty of the day was only insult added to injury. Fortune had just played him a scurvy trick. Now she seemed to be openly laughing at him. He had plunged down into the little corner room to get away from the smiling skies and the tinkling city, and there he sat and hugged his grievance.

With all the longing a man of thirty can compass—and perhaps one's reach in that direction is as great at thirty as it ever is—Gresham longed to be back in England. Ten days ago the skies had wept instead of smiling. Ten days ago, in place of the mutter of wheels,

there had been the great winds booming through the trees outside the library windows. Ten days ago, fortune, instead of laughing at him, had smiled upon him.

He had found Cynthia alone in that wind-beleaguered library, and while the rain had beat upon the leaded panes and the trees had writhed and strained in the storm, they two had talked in front of a fire which crackled encouragement.

So that when, in some unaccountable way, it came to be time for tea before the afternoon was half begun, they had gone to the drawing room with flushed cheeks and shining eyes, and with hearts—Gresham checked himself; well, at any rate, *his* heart had been throbbing fast; and when he was discovered with six lumps of sugar in his tea and in the act of taking the seventh, he had merely laughed joyously and made the somewhat enigmatical remark:

"How quickly one forms a habit!"

He had wondered if Cynthia would guess what he meant; that the hour with her had been sweet. He had met Chenoweth's speculative glance and had laughed outright as he thought what that old cynic would say if the remark were explained to him. Then he had tried to cover the laugh by a palpably unnecessary cough. Good Lord! he certainly had made a bally idiot of himself, but he had been too happy to know what he said or did. When he had gone upstairs to dress for dinner he had stared out of the window a quarter of an hour, finally shaking his fist at the straining trees and muttering:

"She's the one girl in the world I want, and I'll win her or—or——"

There was no admissible alternative, so he had set himself to dressing. Then, when he was almost ready, there had come a knock at the door. He had taken the dispatch from the servant, and had torn it open before he had fairly left off speculating on just how he should manage to tell Cynthia, that very evening, that he loved her. Mechanically he had read:

"Be at the Carlton to-night. Mumsie wants you. M. J. B."

When Blake sent a wire like that and backed it up with "old Mumsie's" name there was but one thing to be done, and that was to make haste to obey. "Old Mumsie"—who had earned his nickname by being the closest-mouthed man in the diplomatic service—was like royalty, to the extent that a request from him had the force of a command among his subordinates. Decidedly there had been but one thing to be done. Gresham sighed as he recalled the promptness with which he had done it.

He remembered the almost actual click with which his mind seemed to slip back into place after its wild fling of reckless, irresponsible joyousness. Before he had fairly realized what had happened, one hand had pulled the bell rope while the other was tugging at the buttons of his waistcoat. Inside of twenty minutes he had slipped into street clothes, and Harris was snapping the catch of his traveling bag.

"'Alf an hour, sir, afore the train passes," Harris had said. "I'm to follow in the morning, sir?"

"If I wire you to do so."

"Quite so, sir. I fancy the brougham is at the door, sir. I told William to look sharp. Sir Henry is in the lib'ry. He sent word by Rawson."

Gresham had hoped against hope that he would find Cynthia downstairs. Before going to the library he had stolen on a swift exploring circuit, but no one was down yet. If only he could have written a note and left it for her! But there had been no time for that. So after hurried apologies to Sir Henry he had jumped into the brougham, and away it had sped into the storm.

Of course he had written her that night from London and again when, very soon, he had found himself booked for Paris. Gresham screwed rather uncomfortably as he remembered these letters; epistles which implied much and said little. But he experienced again the stubborn thrill with which he had told himself that when he asked for Cynthia's love he would do it where he could look into her face and touch her hands. He was a rather wise young man, was Gresham—sometimes.

Anyway he had continually hoped to be back in England within a few days. "Mumsie" had never hinted that he was sending him off on one of these everlasting waiting games which would wear out the patience of forty thousand Jobs! Gresham kicked viciously at the leg of the table and promptly regretted it, which did not improve his temper. Why had he ever gone into the blooming diplomatic service, anyway! He didn't need to and here it was in a fair way to ruin his life.

"Yes, sir," he gloomily told himself, "my whole life may be spoiled by my sticking here like a turtle on a log. Good heavens! think of what I'm risking! And what does all this amount to? Little enough to me, God knows! compared with the happiness of my whole life. Let 'em put somebody else at it. I'm through. By George, I just *am* through! I'll go over to the embassy now and resign. I'd rather have Cynthia than be minister to—to Heaven! I'll resign and I'll take the night boat over and I'll see her to-morrow. That's what I'll do."

Gresham was working himself into a very respectable fever of excitement, one of the symptoms of which was the persistence with which he assured himself that he would do nothing hastily, that he would think the matter over calmly before he acted. His cigar had gone out and he lighted it again with the understanding that the United States diplomatic service should have till the end of that cigar to present arguments.

When he looked up he saw a pair of well-shod feet coming down the corkscrew stairway. The feet were fol-

lowed, in the natural order of events, by the rest of the man, until the sturdy form and good-natured face of Jimmie Redway made their unwelcome appearance. No matter how much you may like a man, you don't want him to put a stop to important negotiations with your country's diplomatic service. Therefore Gresham swore under his breath when he saw the invader of his solitude. Therefore, also, when Jimmie caught sight of him and gave him joyful greeting, Gresham responded with an unenthusiastic "hello."

"What are you doing down here?" demanded the intruder.

"Just thinking."

"Just thinking!" You talk as if it were an everyday occurrence. I was meditating something of the sort myself, but I can't help feeling that the hand of Providence is in your being here with your thinking machinery already in working order."

"You're incorrigible, Jimmie," said Gresham, with a rather elaborate yawn.

"No, merely in love," corrected Jimmie. "Look here!" he went on. "If you were in love, Gresham, and you were pretty sure, or at least you thought, that she was in love with you—only, she didn't know it—what would you do to make her feel what you feel?"

"You might try telling her what you feel," said Gresham, with a promptness which would have indicated to a more discerning listener, that the subject was one to which he had given some thought.

"Do you suppose I haven't?"

Jimmie grunted scornfully.

"Oh, you have! Well, if I were in Paris with the girl I love—did you say she was in Paris?"

"Saints Worth, Paquin, Doucet and so forth be praised, she is! Buying clothes. I suggested to her that it would be a lovely opportunity to get a trousseau, but she's proof even against that temptation."

"Well, try the Pavilion d'Armenonville."

"What's that?" demanded Jimmie, whose French might be better some time, for it never could be worse.

"It's a place in the Bois de Boulogne. One dines there."

Jimmie shook his head dubiously.

"Well," said Gresham, "there is more than dinner. There is music which makes love to you; makes you feel as if there was nothing in the world but love, makes you——"

Gresham broke off and Jimmie gave him a curious glance. They smoked in silence for a moment. Then Jimmie got up.

"I'm going to get out of this hole," he said. "Would you mind writing that unpronounceable name in fairly legible characters for me? Thanks. I believe I'll try your what's-its-name. Wish you'd grace the occasion. I'm such a duffer with these French idiots. There will be three of us without you—and—well, you can see for yourself that three——"

"Thanks, Jimmie, but I'm afraid I can't come."

"Never say can't. No such word in the diplomat's dictionary. Do come along as a favor to me. I—I'm really awfully in earnest about—about it all, in spite of my fooling."

"You mustn't count on me."

"Oh, but I shall!"

Left to himself Gresham threw away the end of his cigar. The diplomatic service had been prevented from offering arguments during the period allotted to it, but that was no concern of his. He was going over to the embassy to put in his resignation, to take effect immediately. He tipped the intermittent waiter exuberantly, ran up the stairs and was just going out of the hotel when he heard his name called. He turned to meet Blake's quizzical smile.

"One looks in vain for the pursuing hounds," drawled Blake. "One infers that if you have kept up that gait very long, you have undoubtedly distanced them."

"I hope to get away from them pretty soon," said Gresham, with a non-committal laugh. "What's up?"

"I think I am. Up against a month of dawdling in Paris."

"You're in the nick of time. Mumsie send you?"

"Mumsie is a-weary of reading the Book of Lamentations as contained in your current correspondence and gives you leave of absence, beginning tomorrow."

Gresham stared. Then he wagged his head.

"And a lucky thing for the d. s. it is! Said d. s. was about to lose one of its brightest ornaments."

"Meaning?"

"Me."

This time, Gresham did not notice any mental click, but it almost seemed as if he should have felt it, so suddenly did his mind slip out of its ordinary groove and go rioting off over the fields of blissful possibilities opened up by Blake's words. It was a short gallop, however, for his companion immediately plunged into official matters. It was seven o'clock when Gresham finally looked at his watch, and jumped up with the air of a man waited for. Blake's quizzical smile returned.

"Hounds got the scent again?" he asked. "You look as if you were going to do another little sprint."

"Reckon I'll have to if I get there before the *entrée*."

"Dinner?"

"Yes. Jimmie Redway and some friends."

"All right. We'll finish up in the morning. Saw Jimmie in London last week. Jolly little chap! In a fair way to negotiate successfully a treaty with a charming little lady—or so everybody thinks."

"Yes," laughed Gresham; "I believe he hopes that I will assist at the ratification to-night."

"Run along then, for heaven's sake!"

In the afternoon Gresham had been in no mood for a dinner at the Pavilion d'Armenonville. Even while he was recommending it to Jimmie Redway the memory of the music had only sharpened his grievance. Now the thought of it seemed to set a song stirring in his own heart.

By the time he had dressed it was too late to think of going out with the others, so he drove directly to the Bois and along the deserted *allées* to the

pavilion, softly luminous in the midst of the trees and already breathing music. As he went from the cloak room to the long veranda in search of the Redway party, he was rather rebellious at the necessity of joining them. He knew that he had not come as a favor to Jimmie, as a set-off to Jimmie's chaperon, or for any other purpose on earth than to listen to the music, and to dream his own dreams. But, of course—

Suddenly Gresham caught at the side of the door and stared. He passed his hand over his eyes and looked again. Then with such swift steps that the discreetly murmuring diners looked up in disapproving surprise, he walked down to the table where some miracle—to him—had placed Cynthia Forrest. Her face was the only one he saw. To speak to her, the only thing he thought of. He had forgotten that there was a world where Jimmie Redways were merely in love.

"Hello, Gresham! Just in time for the *entrée*!"

It was Jimmie who welcomed him. Jimmie! who had been sitting opposite Cynthia, and had seen in the girl's startled eyes the mute announcement of some approach. He held out a friendly hand which Gresham, blinded by a possibility which the situation had flashed across his mind, mechanically took.

"The *entrée*?" he repeated, vaguely. "Oh, I never miss the *entrée*. *Faute de mieux*, there's always my own, you know. Pardon me—" and he turned to Cynthia. "I am so glad to see you. I had no idea you were in Paris."

"We came only yesterday."

Gresham felt a twinge. She had not let him know.

"Miss Forrest knows you?" said Jimmie, delightedly. "That's jolly. Let me endear myself to Mrs. Cabot by presenting you to her. Edith," he went on, turning to what appeared to be a plump aggregation of laces and fluffy blond hair, "you've heard of Gresham, I know. I've seen to it myself on divers occasions. I wish I could soften the blow, but I can't. *This*—is Gresham."

"Jimmie is incorrigible," said Mrs.

Cabot, and Gresham shrank as he recalled the afternoon's phrase: "No, merely in love." His heart, after the first dumb stupor of the shock, was raging fiercely against this incredible, assailing possibility. He tried to look with polite attention at Mrs. Cabot, but the result was a stony glare, which caused that lady to protest inwardly that one needn't be a graven image, even if one was in the diplomatic service.

"Jimmie is my cousin, you know——" began Mrs. Cabot.

"In the twenty-first degree, but of the first power," put in Jimmie.

"And Cynthia is my cousin, too——"

"In the first degree and of no power whatever," interpolated Jimmie.

"So I'm a sort of connecting link."

"Blest be the tie that binds!" said Jimmie, fervently.

Gresham looked at Cynthia. Her eyes did not meet his, but sure as he was that she was conscious of his scrutiny, the telltale blush which crept over her face seemed, by some subtle concert of action, to shadow his own heart. He pulled himself together as well as he could, and succeeded in making his stiff lips form words, he scarcely knew what. From Mrs. Cabot's expression he judged that they were causing her to echo Jimmie's scornful:

"This—is Gresham!"

When the Hungarian musicians, in scarlet and gold, began to play he had a respite from talk, but as for the tumult in his heart, the music was fuel to flame.

It was a waltz which the orchestra played. One which could be heard just then in half the restaurants in Paris; battered out of pianos, sawed from strident violins, blared from the brass mouths of horns. Now, however, the 'cello sang it; at first, so softly that it was like a hushed human voice, faint with love and tremulous with insistent pleading; then louder, but never passing tones which had the breathlessness of quickened heart-throbs; then languorously, so that with every wave of sound eyelids drooped and eyes looked heavily from under them; now running swiftly through a phrase into a sudden silence

—then on again, like love words after a kiss.

A hush had fallen on the place. On the tables the dishes were untouched. The waiters tiptoed. Women sat chin on palm, their faces paler than their wont, their eyes downcast. Men leaned back and dreamily watched the fire of their cigarettes veil itself in ashes. The dusk of the trees seemed full of mystery; the pavilion itself an enchantment in the forest, where all things were either ministers or votaries of love.

The last note lingered, then quivered into silence. There was an instant's pause before a quick, in-drawn breath, like a little gasp, ran from table to table. No one spoke. When, after a moment, the waiters offered a dish, people looked at it blankly as if they scarcely knew where they were. Here and there a woman lifted a glass, vaguely regarded it and put it down again. Here and there a man flicked the ash from his cigarette with uncertain fingers. The place was palpitant with magnetic currents.

Gresham did not look up save for one swift glance at Cynthia. She was sitting very still, her head bent so that her wide hat shadowed her face.

Did fate ever strike a man with a keener shaft of irony, he said to himself, than in thus making him plan the culmination of his own tragedy? For a moment he was tempted to throw away every consideration save that of his love. She was not pledged to Jimmie. Why then not fight for her even now? Oh—of course that was impossible! He was in honor bound to give Jimmie a clear field. Probably there had never been any hope for him anyway. Jimmie had seemed sure of his position. Even Blake had predicted Jimmie's success. Well—at least he could get away where he need not make this ghastly pretense of listening or the still more ghastly attempt to talk. He ought to say something now—this minute—to that woman across the table—what did Jimmie say her name was?

"I can't!" he groaned to himself. Aloud, he said, desperately: "I'm afraid I'll have to run off now."

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Jimmie, with a look of dumb reproach. "Why, you've just come!"

"I know, but—the fact is, I ought not to have come at all. Blake's here. I saw him this afternoon just after you left me. Mumsie sent him over with leave of absence for me and we've a lot of things to straighten out."

He was conscious that Cynthia had looked up quickly, but he did not trust himself to meet her eyes until she spoke.

"Mumsie!" she said. "What a queer name!"

"It's our nickname for W——. He's so secretive he won't put two state papers into the same pigeonhole for fear they may swap information."

Cynthia stared for a moment, then a delicious little ripple of laughter came from her lips, and she finished by burying her face in her hands, laughing so that she was rose red when she looked up.

"I beg your pardon," she said, "but it made me think of something so hopelessly funny."

In spite of the alleged demands of diplomacy in the person of Blake, Gresham did not go. He scarcely knew what to make of it all, but when Cynthia looked at him with a certain indefinable something in her eyes which set his pulses leaping, he shut his mind to thoughts of Jimmie, of honor, of anything and everything, except that he loved this girl and that she smiled on him.

Now and then the scarlet and gold musicians did their almost more than human best to help thrust from him the consciousness that Jimmie was sitting there in a silence phenomenal in that usually garrulous young man. Mrs. Cabot, after her first conversational advance, had relapsed into the inassertive quiet, appropriate to the condition of chaperonage. So Gresham and Cynthia, her eyes like laughing stars, had the talk to themselves. The reaction came when they all stood at the steps waiting for the carriages.

"You won't mind my splitting up the party now, will you?" Jimmie had said in an undertone, and added: "You're an

uncommonly clever good Samaritan. I'll thank you properly later."

Gresham's brain whirled. He had dared to think—to hope—yet here was Jimmie apparently confident and *grateful*! He groaned inwardly as he realized the strait that he was in, but there was no help for it. He must say good-night to her, for here was Jimmie's carriage. He waited for one despairing moment, then turned to Cynthia, but Jimmie was before him.

"Oh, Cynthia," said he, "bring Gresham in when you get to the hotel, will you? I want to see him."

Gresham, dumb with bewilderment, took Mrs. Cabot's outstretched hand, bowed over it and, still speechless, saw Jimmie help her into the carriage and ride away with her. He could scarcely command himself enough to give his own coachman the address, as he took his seat beside Cynthia, but as they swept into the white road, winding out into the night, he turned to her.

"Isn't Jimmie in love with you?" he demanded.

"Strange to say," she laughed, "Jimmie is not."

"Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed, bending toward her; "for *I—am!* Do you hear me, dear? *I—am!* I thought I was never going to have the right to tell you, and now I can't say it often enough. Can you—could you—oh, there's no could or should about it! You simply must love me. Don't you think you could manage it, or a good imitation of it—sometime?"

Her eyes shone for only an instant into his, but in them the indefinable had defined itself.

When they had left the Bois, Gresham suddenly remembered to ask her why she had not answered his letters. The question brought again that ripple of laughter, and again she hid her face in her hands.

"You will never let me hear the last of it," she said, "but it's too good to keep. The morning after your unceremonious departure I was down in the library, reading, when Mr. Chenoweth came in and began fussing among the papers on the desk. Suddenly he

laughed—that little, short, sneering laugh of his—and held out a telegram. I didn't realize what he was doing, so took it and read it. Do you guess? No? It was the telegram calling you to London."

"Yes," reflected Gresham. "I remember taking it down to Sir Henry."

"Well, Mr. Chenoweth found it."

"'Diplomatic affairs!' he sneered. 'Mumsie wants you.' I suppose we are to believe that 'Mumsie' is an ambassador. 'Tootsy-wootsy' will be consul-general next!"

Gresham muttered an indignant exclamation.

"But you didn't believe the silly old cad!"

"No—no, I didn't believe him, but —"

"You might have given me a chance to explain."

"Well, that's the conclusion I arrived at myself. Wasn't Cousin Edith's need of clothes an opportune circumstance—from certain points of view?"

"Dearest!"

There was a pause, not to be put down among the lost moments, then Gresham remembered to feel at least a spark of curiosity concerning his *dea ex machina*.

"Who is Cousin Edith anyway? I thought Jimmie called her *Mrs.* Somebody-or-other."

"So he did. Mrs. Cabot. I think they began being in love with each other when they were boy and girl together. But when Jimmie was only a freshman in college she blossomed out into society. She was eighteen and he was only eighteen. You understand the difference, don't you? Before Jimmie was a junior her mother had married her to a man of forty who had more dollars in the bank than red corpuscles in his blood. The balance should be the other

way, shouldn't it? At any rate he died after five years, and Edith has been occupied since then in getting over the impression that Jimmie is still 'only eighteen.'"

To all of which Gresham's response was so irrelevant that it really does not deserve to be recorded.

"It appears, then, to have been a successful evening," he said later, as Jimmie showed signs of running down, conversationally. They had been smoking and talking—at least, Jimmie had been talking—down in the little corner room.

"Yes, everything is all right at last! Don't you think that old Bible fellow's record looks sort of skimpy alongside of mine? He served seven years for his wife and I've served ever *since* I was seven for mine. She asked me to tie her shoe then and I've been tying it, literally and figuratively, ever since."

Gresham looked at him with a shade of wonder, partly at this new light on Jimmie's character, partly at the circumstance of anybody but Cynthia winning such devotion. Then he congratulated Jimmie with a warmth which touched that happy mortal's already grateful heart.

"You're awfully good, Gresham," he said. "Positively, you seem as pleased as if you were the lucky man instead of me."

Gresham laughed.

"I am," he said.

It was a somewhat ambiguous remark, but, fortunately, that never occurred to Jimmie. And as Gresham knew what he meant and Jimmie thought that *he* knew, they parted in a state of mutual satisfaction which had the effect of causing the intermittent waiter to long remember that day as a red-letter one in his career of gain.



The Obligations of a Gentleman

By Joseph C. Lincoln

Author of "Cap'n Eri," "Cape Cod Ballads," Etc.

THE major came to Harnisport one morning late in August—came, and created an immediate sensation. "Redny" Blount, who drives the "depot wagon," was wrestling with a large sample trunk belonging to the traveling representative of Messrs. Braid & Gimp, of Boston, when he heard a voice—and such a voice—saying:

"Pardon me, my dear sir, but may I trouble you for one moment?"

Now "Redny" was not used to being addressed as "my dear sir." He turned wonderingly, and saw the major, in all his glory, standing beside him. "Redny's" gaze took in the tall, slim figure in the frock coat tightly buttoned; took in the white hair, worn just long enough to touch the collar of the frock coat; the long, drooping white mustache and imperial; the old-fashioned stock and open collar; the black and white checked trousers; the gaiters; and, last of all, the flat-brimmed, carefully brushed, old-fashioned silk hat. Mr. Blount gasped.

"Huh?" he said.

"Pardon me, my dear sir," repeated the major, blandly, smoothly, and with an air of—well, not condescension, but gracious familiarity. "Will you be so extremely kind as to inform me concerning the most direct route to the Ocean View House?"

The name of the summer hotel was the only part of this speech that struck home to "Redny's" awed mind.

"Ocean View?" he repeated, slowly. "Why, yes, sir. I'm goin' right that

way. If you'll git right into my barge I'll fetch you there in ten minutes."

There was enough in this reply, and the manner in which it was delivered, to have furnished the station idlers, in the ordinary course of events, with matter for gossip and discussion for a week. Mr. Blount had not addressed a person as "sir" since he went to school. But no one thought of this; all were too much overcome by the splendor of the major's presence.

"Thank you," replied the major. "Thank you. I am obliged to you, sir. Augustus, you may place the baggage in this gentleman's conveyance."

Augustus was an elderly negro, very black as to face and a trifle shabby as to clothes, but with a shadow of his master's gentility, like a reflected luster, pervading his person. He bowed low, departed and returned dragging a large, old style trunk, and carrying a plump valise.

"Augustus," said the major. "You may sit upon the seat with the driver. That is," he added, courteously, "if Mr.—Mr.—"

"Blount," prompted the gratified "Redny."

"If Mr. Blount will be good enough to permit you to do so."

"Why, sartin. Jump right up. Gid-dap, you!"

There was but one passenger, beside the major and Augustus, in the "depot wagon" that morning. The season for "summer folks" was almost over, and this passenger was Mrs. Polena Ginn, who had been to Brockton on a visit.

To Mrs. Polena the major, raising his hat in a manner that no native of Harnisport could acquire by a lifetime of teaching, observed that it was a beautiful morning. The flustered widow replied that it "was so." This was the beginning of a conversation that lasted until the Ocean View House was reached, a conversation that left Polena impressed with the idea that her new acquaintance was as near the pink of perfection as mortal could be.

"It wan't his clothes, nuther," she told her brother, Obed Gott, as they sat at the dinner table. "I don't know what 'twas, but you could jest see that he was a gentleman all over. I wouldn't wonder if he was one of them New York millionaires. 'Redny' Blount says he see his name onto the register at the Ocean View and 'twas 'Cuthbertson Scott Hardee.' Ain't that a tony name for you? And his darky man called him 'major.' I never see sech manners on a livin' soul! Obed, I *do* wish you'd stop eatin' pie with a knife."

So under these pleasing circumstances did Maj. Cuthbertson Scott Hardee make his first appearance in Harnisport, and the reputation spread abroad by Mr. Blount and Mrs. Ginn was confirmed as other prominent citizens met him, and fell under the spell. In two short weeks he was the most popular and respected man in the village. The cottagers and such of the "summer folks" as were still at the Ocean View House pronounced him "delightful" and "so distinguished." The Methodist minister said, at the Thursday evening "sociable," that "Maj. Hardee is a true type of the old school gentleman," whereupon Luther Judd, who was running for selectman, and therefore felt obliged to be interested in all educational matters, asked whereabouts that school was located, and who was teaching it now.

It was a treat to see the major stroll down the "main road" to the post office every pleasant morning. Coat buttoned tight, silk hat the veriest trifle on one side, one glove on and its mate carried with the cane in the other hand, and the buttonhole bouquet—always the bou-

quet—as fresh and bright and jaunty as its wearer himself.

It seemed that every housekeeper whose dwelling happened to be situated along that portion of the "main road" had business in the front yard at the time of the major's passing. There were steps to be swept, or rugs to be shaken, or doorknobs to be polished just at that particular time. Dialogues like the following interrupted the triumphal progress at three minute intervals:

"Good-morning, Mrs. Sogberry. Good-morning. A delightful morning. Busy as the proverbial bee once more, I see. I can never cease to admire the industry and model neatness of the Massachusetts housekeeper. And how is your charming daughter this morning? Better, I trust?"

"Well now, Maj. Hardee, I don't know. Abbie ain't so well's I wish she was. She set up a spell yesterday, but Dr. Drake says she ain't gittin' along the way she'd ought to. I says to him, s'I, 'Abbie ain't never what you'd call a reel hearty eater, but, my land! when she don't eat *nothin'*,' I says—"

An so on and so on, with the major always willing to listen, always sympathetic, and always so charmingly courteous.

One by one the boarders left the Ocean View House until, at last, the major and Augustus were the only ones remaining. And then Mr. Godfrey, the manager, announced his intention of closing the hotel for the season and going back to Boston. Everyone expected that the "gentleman of the old school" would go also, but one evening Jabez Priest, whose business, according to his sign, is "real estate, fire and life insurance, justice of the peace, and houses to let and for sale," rushed into the post office to announce that the major had leased the "Gorham place," furnished, and intended to make Harnisport his home.

"He likes the village so well he's goin' to stay here always," explained Jabez. "Says he's been all 'round the world, but he never see a place he liked so well's he does Harnisport. How's

that for high, hey? And you callin' it a one-horse town, Obed Gott!"

The major moved into the "Gorham place" the next morning. It—the "place"—was an old-fashioned house on the hill by the Methodist church. It had been one of the finest mansions in town once on a time, but had deteriorated rapidly since old Capt. Elijah Gorham died. Augustus carried the major's baggage from the hotel to the house. This was done very early and none of the natives saw the transfer. There was some speculation as to how the darky managed to carry the big trunk single-handed; one of two persons asked Augustus this very question, but they received no satisfactory answer. Augustus was habitually close-mouthed. Mr. Godfrey left town that same morning on the first train.

The major christened his new home "Silverleaf Hall," because of two great "silverleaf" trees that stood by the front door. He had some repairing, paper-hanging and painting done, ordered a big stock of groceries from the local dealer, and showed by his every action that his stay in Harnisport was to be a lengthy one. He hired a pew in the Methodist church, and joined the Setuckit Club, that meets every evening after mail time in the room over Howe's store. Augustus did the marketing for "Silverleaf Hall," and had evidently been promoted to the position of housekeeper.

This was in September. In February the major's popularity was, if anything, more pronounced than ever. One evening of the second week in the last-named month Obed Gott sat by the tea table in his dining room after supper going over the account books of the paint, paper and oil store of which he was the proprietor. His sister, Mrs. Polena Ginn, was washing dishes in the kitchen.

"What's that letter you're readin', Obed?" she called from her post by the sink.

"Nothin'," said her brother, gruffly, crumpling up the sheet of note paper and jamming it into his pocket.

"My sakes! you're shorter'n pie

crust to-night. What's the matter? Anything gone wrong at the store?"

"No."

Silence again, only broken by the clatter of dishes. Then Polena said:

"Obed, when are you goin' to take me up to the clubroom so's I can see that picture of Maj. Hardee that he presented the club with. Everybody says it's jist lovely. Sarah T. says it's perfectly elegant, only not quite so handsome as the major reelly is. She says it don't flatter him none."

"Humph! Anybody'd think Hardee was some kind of a wonder, the way you women folks go on 'bout him. How do you know but what he might be a reg'lar fraud? Looks ain't everything."

"Well, I never! Obed Gott, I sh'd think you'd be 'shamed of yourself, talkin' that way. I shan't speak another word to you to-night. I never see you act so unlikely. An old fraud! The idea! That grand, noble man!"

Obed tried to make some sort of half-hearted apology, but his sister wouldn't listen to it. Polena's dignity was touched. She was a woman of consequence in Harnisport, was Polena. Her husband had, at his death, left her ten thousand dollars in her own right, and she owned bonds and had money in the Orham bank. Nobody, not even her brother, was allowed to talk to her in that fashion.

To tell the truth Obed was sorry he had offended his sister. He had been throwing out hints of late as to the necessity of building an addition to the paint and oil store, and had cast a longing look upon a portion of Polena's ten thousand. The lady had not promised to extend the financial aid, but she had gone so far as to say she would think about it. So Obed regretted his insinuations against the major's integrity.

After a while he threw the account books upon the top of the chest of drawers, put on his hat and coat and announced that he was going down to the "club" for a "spell." Polena did not deign to reply, so, after repeating the observation, he went out and slammed the door.

The major was not at the club that

evening, though most of the other members were. Obed played a game of checkers and lost, which did not tend to make his temper any sweeter. His ill-nature was so apparent that Daniel Foster, who keeps the grocery store, finally commented upon it.

"What's the matter with you, Obed?" he asked. "Too much of P'lina's mince pie?"

"No," grunted Mr. Gott, shortly.

"What is it, then? Ain't paint sellin' well?"

"Sellin' well 'nough. I could sell a hundred ton of paint to-morrow, more'n likely, but when it come to gittin' the money for it, that would be another story. If folks would pay their bills there wouldn't be no trouble."

"Who's stuck you now?"

"I don't s'pose anybody has, but it's jist as bad when they don't pay up. I've got to have money to keep a-goin' with. It don't make no diff'rence if it's as good a customer as Maj. Hardee; he ought to remember that we ain't all rich like him and——"

A general movement among all the club members interrupted him. The checker players left their boards and came over; the readers laid down their papers and joined the circle.

"What was that you said?" asked Foster, uneasily. "The major owin' you money, was it?"

"Oh, course I know he's all right and a fine man and all that," protested Obed, feeling himself put on the defensive. "But that ain't it. What's a feller goin' to do when he needs the money and gits a letter like that?"

He drew the crumpled sheet of note paper from his pocket, and threw it on the table. Foster picked it up and read it aloud, as follows:

"SILVERLEAF HALL, Feb. 10th.

"MY DEAR MR. GOTT: I am in receipt of your courteous communication of recent date. I make it an unvarying rule to keep little ready money here in Harnisport, preferring rather to let it remain at interest in the financial institutions of the cities. Another rule of mine, peculiar, I dare say—even eccentric, if you like—is never to pay by check. I am expecting remittances from my attorneys, however, and will then bear

you in mind. Again thanking you for your courtesy, and begging you to extend to your sister my kindest regards, I remain, my dear sir,

"Yours very respectfully,

"CUTHBERTSON SCOTT HARDEE.

"P. S.—I shall be delighted to have the pleasure of entertaining your sister and yourself at dinner at the hall on any date agreeable to you. Kindly let me hear from you regarding this at your earliest convenience. I must insist upon this privilege, so do not disappoint me, I beg."

The reception accorded this most gentlemanly epistle was peculiar. Mr. Foster laid it upon the table and put his hand into his own pocket. So did Ezra Weeks, the butcher; Caleb Small, the dry goods dealer; "Hen" Leadbetter, the livery stable keeper; "Bash" Taylor, the milkman, and three or four others. And, wonder of wonders, each produced a sheet of note paper exactly like Obed's.

They spread them out on the table. The dates were, of course, different, and they differed in other minor particulars, but in the main they were exactly alike. And each one of them ended with an invitation to dinner.

The members of the Setuckit Club looked at each other in amazement. Foster was the first to speak.

"Godfrey mighty!" he exclaimed. "Say, this is funny, ain't it? It's more'n funny; it's queer! By jiminy, it's more'n that—it's serious! Look here, fellers; is there anybody in this crowd that the major's paid for anything any time?"

They waited. No one spoke. Then, with one impulse, every face swung about and looked up to where, upon the wall, hung the life-size photograph of the major, dignified, gracious and gilt-framed. It had been presented to the club two months before by Cuthbertson Scott Hardee, himself.

"Ike—Ike Peters," said Foster. "Say, Ike—has he ever paid you for havin' that took?"

Mr. Peters, who was the town photographer, reddened, hesitated, and then stammered, "Why no, he ain't, yit."

"Humph!" grunted Foster. No one

else said anything. One or two took out pocket memorandum books and went over some figures entered therein. Judging by their faces the results of these calculations were not pleasing. Obed was the first to break the painful silence:

"Well!" he exclaimed, sarcastically; "ain't nobody got nothin' to say? If they ain't, I have. Or, at any rate, I've got somethin' to do." And he rose and started to put on his coat.

"Hi! hold on a minute, Obed!" cried Foster. "Where are you goin'?"

"I'm goin' to put my bill in Squire Baker's hands for c'lection, and I'm goin' to do it to-night, too."

He was on his way to the door, but two or three ran to stop him.

"Don't be foolish, Obed," said Foster. "Don't go off ha'f cocked. Maybe we're gittin' scared about nothin'. We don't know but we'll git every cent that's owed us."

"Don't know! Well, I ain't goin' to wait to find out. What makes me bilin' is to think how we've set still and let a man that we never saw afore last September, and don't know one blessed thing about, run up bills and run 'em up. How we come to be sech everlastin' fools I don't see! What did we let him have the stuff for? Why didn't we make him pay? I——"

"Now see here, Obed Gott," broke in Weeks, the butcher. "You know why jist as well as we do. Why, blast it!" he added, earnestly, "if he was to come into my shop to-morrow and tip that old high hat of his, and smile and say 'twas a fine mornin' and 'How's the good lady to-day?' and all that, he'd git ha'f the meat there was in the place, and I wouldn't say 'Boo' I jist couldn't, that's all."

This frank statement was received with approving nods and a chorus of muttered "That's so's."

"It looks to me this way," declared Foster. "If the major's all right, he's a mighty good customer for all of us. If he ain't all right we've got to find it out, but we're in too deep to run resks of gittin' him mad 'fore we know for sure. Let's think it over for a week.

Inside of that time some of us'll hint to him, polite but firm, you understand, that we've got to have somethin' on account. A week from to-night we'll meet in the back room of my store, talk it over and decide what to do. What do you say?"

Everybody but Obed agreed. He declared that he had lost money enough and wasn't going to be a fool any longer. The others argued with him patiently for a while and then Leadbetter, the livery stable keeper, said sharply:

"See here, Obe! You ain't the only one in this. How much does the major owe you?"

"Pretty nigh twenty dollars."

"Humph! You're lucky. He owes me over thirty, and I guess Foster's worse off than any of us. Ain't that so, Dan?"

"About a hundred, even money," answered the grocer, shortly. "No use, Obed, we've got to hang together. Wait a week and then see. And, fellers," he added, "don't tell a soul about this business, 'specially the women folks. There ain't a woman nor girl in this town that don't think Maj. Hardee's an A1, gold-plated saint, and 'twouldn't be safe to break the spell on a guess."

Obed reached home even more disgruntled than when he left it. He sat up until after twelve thinking and smoking, and when he went to bed he had a brilliant idea. The next day he wrote a letter and posted it.

This was on Tuesday. The answer to the letter came on Saturday and when, the following Monday evening, the creditors of Maj. Hardee met according to agreement in the back room of Daniel Foster's grocery, Obed greeted them with an air of gloomy triumph, and a sort of condescending pity.

Foster, acting as self-appointed chairman, asked if anyone had anything to report. For himself, he had seen the major and asked point-blank for payment of his bill. The major had been very polite and was apparently much concerned that his fellow townsman should have been inconvenienced by

any neglect of his. He would write to his attorneys at once, so he said,

"He said a whole lot more, too," added the grocer. "Said he had never been better served than by the folks in this town, and that I kept a fine store, and so on and so forth. But I haven't got any money yit. Anybody else had any better luck?"

No one had, although several had had similar interviews with the master of "Silverleaf Hall."

"Obed look's if he knew somethin'," remarked Weeks. "What is it, Obed?"

Mr. Gott scornfully waved his hand.

"You fellers make me laff," he said. "You talk and talk, but you don't do nothin'. I b'lieve in doin', myself. When I went home t'other night, thinks I, 'There's one man that might know somethin' 'bout old Hardee, and that's Godfrey, the hotel man.' So I wrote to Godfrey up to Boston and I got a letter from him. Here 'tis."

He read the letter aloud. Mr. Godfrey wrote that he knew nothing about Maj. Hardee further than that he had been able to get nothing from him in payment for his board at the Ocean View House.

"So I seized his trunk," the letter concluded. "There was nothing in it worth mentioning, but I took it on principle. The major told me a lot about writing to his attorneys for money, but I've been in the hotel business too long to pay much attention to that. I'm afraid he's an old fraud, but I can't help liking him, and if I owned the Ocean View, instead of being merely the manager, I guess he would have got away scot-free."

"There!" exclaimed the triumphant Obed, with a sneer, "I guess that settles it, don't it! Maybe you'll be willin' to turn your bills over to Squire Baker now."

But they were not willing. Foster argued, and justly, that although the major was, in all probability, a fraud, not even a lawyer could get water out of a stone and that when a man had nothing, suing him was a waste of time and cash.

"Besides," he said, "there's jist a

chance that he may have attorneys and property somewheres else. Let's write him a letter and everyone of us sign it, tellin' him that we'll call on him a week from to-night expectin' to be paid in full. If we call and don't git any satisfaction, why we ain't any worse off, and then we can—well, run him out of town, if nothin' more."

So the letter was written and signed by every man there. It was a long list of signatures and an alarming total of indebtedness. The letter was posted that night.

The week that followed seemed even longer to Obed than the preceding one had been. He was ill-natured at home and ugly at the shop, and Polena declared that he was "gittin'" so a body couldn't live with him." Her own spirits were remarkably high, and Obed noticed that, as the days went by, she seemed to be unusually excited. On Thursday she announced that she was going to Orham to visit her niece, one Sarah Emma Cahoon, and wouldn't be back for three or four days, anyway. He knew better than to object and so she went.

On Saturday each of the signers of the letter to Maj. Hardee received a courteous note saying that the major would be pleased to receive the gentlemen at the hall on the evening named in their letter. Nothing was said about payment.

So, on the fateful evening, the creditors gathered at the grocery and marched in procession across the fields and up to "Silverleaf Hall."

"Hardee's been to Orham to-day," whispered the keeper of the livery stable, as they entered the yard. "He drove over this mornin' and come back to-night."

"Drove over!" exclaimed Obed, halting in his tracks. "He did? Where'd he git the team? I'll bet five dollars you was soft enough to let him have it, and never said a word. Well, if you ain't— By jiminy! you wait till I git at him! I'll show you that he can't soft-soap me."

Augustus met them at the door and ushered them into the old-fashioned

parlor. The major, calm, cool and imperturbably polite, was waiting to receive them. He made some observation concerning the weather.

"The day's fine enough," interrupted Obed, pushing to the front, "but that ain't what we come here to talk about. Are you goin' to pay us what you owe? That's we want to know."

The "gentleman of the old school" did not answer immediately. Instead he turned to the solemn servant at his elbow.

"Augustus," he said, "you may make ready." Then, looking serenely at the irate Mr. Gott, whose clinched fist rested upon the center table which he had thumped to emphasize his demands, the major asked:

"I beg your pardon, my dear sir, but what is the total of my indebtedness to you?"

"Nineteen dollars and twenty-eight cents, and I want you to understand that——"

Maj. Hardee held up a slim, white hand.

"One moment, if you please," he said. "Now, Augustus."

Augustus opened the desk in the corner and produced an imposing stack of bank notes. Then he brought forth neat piles of halves, quarters, dimes and pennies, and arranged the whole upon the table. Obed's mouth and those of his companions, gaped in amazement.

"Have you your bill with you, Mr. Gott?" inquired the major.

Dazedly Mr. Gott produced the required document.

"Thank you. Augustus, nineteen twenty-eight to this gentleman. Kindly receipt the bill, Mr. Gott, if you please. A mere formality, of course, but it is well to be exact. Thank you, sir. And now, Mr. Foster."

One by one the creditors shamefacedly stepped forward, received the amount due, receipted the bill, and stepped back again. Mr. Peters, the photographer, was the last to sign.

"Gentlemen," said the major, "I am sorry that my carelessness in financial matters should have caused you this trouble, but now that you are here, a

representative gathering of Harnisport's men of affairs, upon this night of all nights, it seems fitting that I should ask for your congratulations. Augustus."

The wooden-faced Augustus retired to the next room and reappeared carrying a tray upon which were a decanter and glasses.

"Gentlemen," continued the major. "I have often testified to my admiration and regard for your—perhaps I may now say *our*—charming village. This admiration and regard has extended to the fair daughters of the township. It may be that some of you have conscientious scruples against the use of intoxicants. These scruples I respect, but I am sure that none of you will refuse to at least taste a glass of wine with me when I tell you that I have this day taken one of the fairest to love and cherish during life."

He stepped to the door of the dining room, opened it, and said, quietly, "My dear, will you honor us with your presence?"

There was a rustle of black silk and there came through the doorway the stately form of her who had been Mrs. Polena Ginn.

"Gentlemen," said the major, "permit me to present to you my wife, the new mistress of 'Silverleaf Hall.'"

The faces of the ex-creditors were pictures of astonishment. Mr. Gott's expressive countenance turned white, then red and then settled to a mottled shade, almost as if he had the measles. Polena rushed to his side.

"Oh, Obed!" she exclaimed. "I know we'd ought to have told you, but 'twas only last Wednesday the major asked me, and we thought we'd keep it a secret so's to s'prise you. Mr. Langworthy over to Orham married us, and——"

"My dear," her husband blandly interrupted, "we will not intrude our private affairs upon the patience of these good friends. And now, gentlemen, let me propose a toast: To the health and happiness of the mistress of 'Silverleaf Hall!' Brother Obed, I——"

The outside door closed with a slam. "Brother Obed" had fled.

A little later, when the rest of the former creditors of the major came out into the moonlight, they found their companion standing by the gate gazing stonily into vacancy. "Hen" Leadbetter, who, with Foster, brought up the rear of the procession, said reflectively:

"When he fust fetched out that stack of money I couldn't scarcely b'lieve my eyes. I begun to think that we fellers had put our foot in it for sartin, and

had lost a mighty good customer; but, of course, it's all plain enough *now*."

"Yes," remarked Weeks, with a nod, "I allers heard that P'lina kept a mighty good balance in the Orham bank."

"It looks to me," said Foster, slyly, "as if we owed Obed here a vote of thanks. How 'bout that, Obed?"

And then Maj. Hardee's new brother-in-law awoke with a jump.

"Aw, you go to grass!" he snarled, and tramped savagely off down the hill.



REVENGE

SHE used to have her programme filled long ere the dance began,
And each who had his name there deemed himself a lucky man;
She used to glide across the floor, as graceful as a swan,
And, ah, with what fine airs she wore the things that she had on!

With well-assumed regret she used to hand her card to me
And murmur: "I'd be pleased to, but there's nothing left, you see."
In deep dismay I'd slink away to grieve about the snub—
She was the reigning beauty then, and I was just a cub.

The other night I saw her sit back in a corner where
The wrinkled chaperons were grouped. Her sister, young and fair,
Smiled sweetly up at me as we went gayly gliding past,
And as her breath was on my cheek I felt my heart go fast.

Once where she sat I would have knelt, if she had willed it so,
And once my dreams were full of her, but that was long ago:
Once with a patronizing air she handed me my snub—
Ah, she reigned as a beauty then and I was just a cub.

S. E. KISER.

STORIES OF THE STREET

V.—THE CALL OF THE STREET

By L. J. Van Ness

AS the cab whirled round the corner, and the rumble of the wheels upon the cobbles was replaced by the resonant, hollow *clap-clap* of hoofs upon Fifth Avenue's asphalt, Steele turned suddenly, looking at his wife.

He had an impression that she had spoken and that he, momentarily lost in the intricacies of the Interstate Tunnel deal, had neglected to answer her.

"What did you say, Sara?" he asked. But his words were drowned in the roar of a passing Forty-second Street car.

The rubber-tired wheels of the cab bounced softly across the car tracks, and the ride home—uptown—was continued with speed undiminished. Little flashes of cold light illuminated the interior of the vehicle in quick succession, thrown by the passing procession of high-swinging arc lamps, swiftly silhouetting the woman's pure profile against the dark background of cushions. Steele watched, for the moment forgetful of the Interstate Tunnel problem, swelling with the pride of possession.

"By George," he said, with contented appreciation, "she is beautiful."

She sat a trifle away from him, leaning back comfortably, her figure lost in the folds of her opera cloak. But above it her face gleamed, fair, slightly flushed, framed in the massed copper of her hair; her lips a bit parted, her lashes lowered. To Steele's eyes, as if they had been abruptly opened, she appeared exceedingly fragile, sensitive, delicate—"like a flower," he thought, with an unaccustomed tenderness stirring in his heart.

She seemed unconscious of his re-

gard, rapt in her own imaginings. She was toying idly with her fan—worrying it with her gloved fingers. It slipped, fell to the floor of the cab. Steele stooped and recovered it. She looked at him with a faint smile.

"Thank you, dear," she said; "I didn't think you'd notice."

He saw that her eyes were warm and glowing. She moved nearer to him, and her hand went out to find his, and did. Steele's palm closed over her fingers, and she sighed softly. Steele's mind harked back to Interstate Tunnel, and he began to debate the advisability of calling upon the pool for more funds, should the upward rise of "Tunnel Common" slacken during the morrow's forenoon. A second sigh, barely audible, brought him back to his wife.

"What was it, dear?" he asked.

"What was it you said awhile back?"

"I said?"—with the rising inflection. She frowned in pretty perplexity, trying to remember.

"Just as I closed the door," he helped.

"I thought you asked a question—I was thinking of something else at the moment."

"Oh! Of course you were thinking of something else; you are always thinking of something else, Jim." There was a note of petulance in her voice that puzzled him. "And that was what I asked. It was silly enough—I said, 'A penny for your thoughts.' Extravagance, for I knew you were thinking of business."

He felt vaguely that he was being indicted and began clumsily to defend himself.

"Yes. You were right. Affairs in

rather a mix up just now, little girl; they bother a chap. Important deal on——"

"Always, always," she commented, wearily—even a trifle bitterly.

But he did not hear; the bare reference to the importance of the tunnel deal had plunged his mind into a profundity of calculations. He began to scowl at the transient sheen of electric light on the glass curtain, biting his under lip in his abstraction. By the time they had reached home he was miles away from his wife, fighting the morrow's battles on the Exchange floor. And in such wise, his eyes in preoccupation fixed on vacancy, he helped her from the cab.

But, she considered, she must forgive him; certainly he had much to concern himself with; his business was his being, she knew—only, she could wish it might be otherwise, if but for a little while!

While he fumbled with his keys, she shivered noticeably in the brisk air of the early morning hours.

"Cold, dear?" he asked, roused out of his affairs for the moment.

Smiling up at him, "A wee bit," she confessed, "but happy, Jim."

"Eh?" He stared. "Happy?"

"Happy," she repeated with a low laugh as the door swung open.

Steele gazed after her, bewildered, while he shot the bolts. Then he followed her upstairs, heavily. Ten minutes later, she looked up from her dressing table to see him standing in the doorway of her boudoir, glowering down upon her. He had exchanged his dress coat for a quilted smoking jacket, his shoes for slippers, and was smoking; she smiled, struck by the grotesque figure he made.

"Well?" she queried, archly, her hands busy with her hair.

"What made you say that, Sara?" he demanded, bluntly.

Her eyes widened.

"Say what, Jim?"

"About being happy. What made you mention it? Why are you more happy to-night than any other? Aren't you generally happy, little girl?"

She rose, came over to him, kissed

him. Then, fumbling with a frog on his jacket, "I was more happy to-night than usually," she admitted. "I suppose—generally—I'm as happy as I've any right to be, dear."

"I don't understand." His face showed that plainly. "Why—to-night especially?"

"Because my husband was with me—don't you see? I wonder——" She paused. "I wonder if you realize how little, how very little of your time you give your wife, Jim."

"Why—I——" he stammered awkwardly, struggling with a totally new idea. This had never occurred to him before.

"You are away all day," she went on—not complaining, but making a calm statement of fact—"and every night you are off to the club, or some one is here, closeted with you. It's business, I know, but—— Why, I hardly ever have you to myself, Jim. To-night, the opera, the music, the lights, with you—why, it was like an oasis to me—an oasis in a weary, husbandless desert." She laughed nervously.

"But—but business——" he tried to object, realizing the justice of her finding.

"Is there nothing in life but Wall Street?" she pleaded, softly. "Can't you give it up, Jim, before long, for my sake? Why should you keep on and on forever, wearing your life out—for what? You've made a comfortable fortune, dear; it's enough to last us the rest of our lives and give the boy a good start besides. Why need you keep it up, always, at the expense of your health and your family? You know that Dr. Dexter warned you to take a rest last month, and you laughed at him, and——"

"Oh, Dexter!" he derided. "He doesn't understand. Neither do you, little girl. Why, what'd I do, anyhow? No." His mouth straightened into a firm, hard line; he had settled the matter, man-like, forgetting the original issue—her happiness, not his own. "No, I can't give it up. It would be foolishness with—with my prospects, my career. No, you don't understand." He

decided to comfort her with a platitude: "Men must work and women must weep, you know."

"Why?" she cried, rebelliously. "Why must we weep? Why must men work incessantly?"

"The law of life," he told her with portentous gravity. He began to enumerate her blessings, exclusive of himself. "I don't think you've any reason to complain, Sara. You've the boy—"

"He is dear," she agreed, her eyes softening at the thought of their child. "But children are not everything to a woman; some women want shares in their husbands, too."

He persisted: "You have household duties, your friends—"

"I'd like to have more of my husband," she contended, stubbornly.

From which attitude he failed to move her.

Naturally enough, perhaps, the element of the unforeseen figures largely in the life of the Street. On the following afternoon, Steele's deal in Interstate Tunnel came to an unexpected end—to a successful culmination unexpectedly sudden. The clique of men who, desiring to obtain control of the Interstate Tunnel Company, had combined their interests and put Steele at their head, allowing him full discretion—thereby forming what is termed a "blind pool"—had calculated that his campaign would be one of weeks, if not of months, before their object was attained.

As it happened, however, another combination had been formed with precisely the same object, thereby creating an unusual demand for Tunnel Common—so unusual, in fact, that the market price went up by leaps and bounds, and the trading in Tunnel Common became the feature of the day. Steele and those brokers who acted by his orders bought steadily, at the market; the opposition bought as steadily, if less successfully.

But, about two o'clock in the afternoon, the ticker ceased to record transactions in Tunnel Common; the demand had outlasted the supply; a "natural corner" had resulted. Steele and his

opponents between them had bought up every available share in addition to a large number of shares in excess of the total issue—the outcome of persistent "short" selling by the bear element.

When he realized what had happened, Steele told himself that his work for the day was done. He could return to his office and count the gains and receive the congratulations of his associates. The shorts were squealing in agony, but that was their affair; he would settle with them to-morrow.

As he was about to leave the floor, however, the staccato rapping of the gavel on the rostrum made him pause; he knew, or suspected, what was coming, and would not have missed it for much. A slight lull succeeding the frenzied uproar that had prevailed in the board room, he was able to hear the chairman's voice as it boomed out over the heads of the brokers, announcing the suspension of Belden & Tausig.

Steele smiled grimly under his mustache.

"Belden will think twice, I guess, before he monkeys with the buzz saw again," he thought as he crossed Broad Street to the Mills Building.

At the same time he was both surprised and disappointed to find that he was experiencing nothing of elation; he, who had hugged jealously to himself the hope of such a just vengeance during all the years of his enmity with Belden, felt the glow of accomplishment barely warm in his breast. Rather, indeed, he was conscious of a dull depression, a listless weariness, as though he were an old man, drugged with years. Which Steele was not.

Even his success in obtaining the control of Interstate Tunnel seemed a tawdry, futile thing. He found himself walking slowly, his step lacking its accustomed springiness, his head drooping and hot and heavy, his feet like leaden weights. He was tired, he assumed, waking up to the fact that he had been working hard and very steadily for many days.

And when he found Belden, the obnoxious, humbly waiting him in the anteroom, the keen edge of his grati-

fication was blunted by that same, gray apathy. He did not care—now. True, he had discounted the meeting by anticipation. But then his anticipations had been marked by a lively interest; with infinite relish he had considered how he would bear himself in this contingency, when Belden should come to sue for mercy: with what cold magnanimity, what lofty tolerance he would treat this man who had schemed and all but accomplished his ruin in the days when Steele was practically a raw youngster striving for a foothold in the Street. But now when, well-nigh literally, his foot was upon his enemy's neck—now he was utterly careless, merely very, very tired.

It was not until Belden approached him with his insinuating whine that was colored with something of his one-time patronizing disdain—"I say, Jim, my boy"—that the change came. It was utterly without premeditation on Steele's part, something entirely outside of his calculations. When the hateful accents fell upon his ear, Steele seemed to lose control of himself; for the time the room swam before him; he was shaken by a little gust of febrile rage, which, he later considered, must have seemed childishly spiteful.

"Oh, go to the devil!" he cried, whirling upon his heel to face Belden. "You—you get out of my office—I'll have nothing to do with you!"

He towered above the little man, his face working, his clinched hand trembling in the air. A glint of terror came into Belden's eyes; once before one of his dupes had dealt with Belden with physical violence, and the little man had never forgotten it. He backed away hastily; and then, accepting his just due as the inevitable, was gone, slinking with rounded shoulders over which he bade farewell to Steele with a malevolent glance.

Instantly Steele began to regret; also he was somewhat scared; the passion which had gripped him so strongly that he had forgotten himself was a new thing in his experience. He had never made such an exhibition of himself—to his knowledge, at least—so causelessly.

He glanced around the room, shame-faced, wondering who had witnessed his transport.

There were two witnesses; Hunt, office partner of the firm of C. D. Hunt & Wilder, through which Steele cleared his transactions, and in whose offices he was accorded a desk as a courtesy; and a stranger to Steele—a stout man, florid of complexion, thick-set. Him Steele intuitively knew for Tausig, Belden's partner.

"Oh," he said, shortly, "you're Tausig?" The fellow nodded. "I've nothing against you personally, Tausig," Steele continued more calmly; "but Belden—! A damned scoundrel—gives you a bad name, Tausig. But this is what I wanted to say: you tell Belden what I had intended to, that your firm will get just the same treatment from us as the rest of the shorts in this deal. And—and we're not disposed to be hard on the shorts."

Tausig nodded curtly. "That's what we wanted to know, Mr. Steele," he replied. "If there's to be no discrimination, we may pull through. Good-day." And he left.

Hunt watched the door close before speaking. Then he laughed shortly.

"If Belden's looks go for anything, Steele," he commented, "you'll pay high for that."

Steele stared at him dully under heavy eyelids.

"Oh, Belden," he said, after a while, slowly; "he be damn'. Anyhow, his power in the Street is broken."

To himself his tongue seemed thick and unwieldy; he had some difficulty in enunciating distinctly. It annoyed Steele, and Hunt was watching him strangely.

"Yes," he heard Hunt say, "but this isn't the first time that Belden's been broken. Maybe it isn't to be the last, either."

"To tell the truth," said Steele, very carefully, "I didn't mean to flare up—that way. Something seemed to snap. I wonder—"

"Reaction, perhaps," suggested Hunt, coolly philosophical in the consideration of another's troubles. "You've kept

yourself keyed up to the fever pitch for several weeks, and a reaction's bound to come."

Steele did not directly reply. He sat down, with his hands in his pockets, and stared gloomily at the carpet.

"Anyhow," he said, rising again after an interval, "I'm—tired, tired. I'm going home—now. Take care of things

He reached blindly for his hat and staggered a pace or two toward the door. Hunt jumped up, alarmed.

"Here, old man!" he said.

Steele fell, like a column pushed from its base; he fell, to lie inert, supine, breathing heavily.

It was three months later, almost to a day, before the Street again knew Jim Steele's footsteps.

Following his discharge from a sanitarium as convalescent—a discharge accompanied by a warning that he would return to business life within three years at his peril—a few weeks had been put in at Palm Beach. Now Steele and his wife were to spend a few weeks in town until their son's spring term at school should be ended, when the three of them were to go abroad.

As for Mrs. Steele, she was radiantly happy; for the first time in their twelve years of married life she had what she most desired in all the world—first place in the thoughts of her husband. For it was an understood thing that Steele had given up the Street and all its works—"for better or worse," Steele had laughed when he promised.

Yet it was with a distinct shiver of foreboding that the woman looked up from her breakfast plate, on the morning following their return to the city, to find Steele eying her with a gaze half doubtful, half deprecating.

She put down her fork deliberately, her eyes upon the letter which he had been reading, and still held in his hand. Steele fancied that she lost a shade of color, and he could not ignore the anxiety in her eyes.

"What is it?" she demanded, almost breathlessly.

He laughed lightly to reassure her.

"Why, nothing of any great impor-

tance, Sara; only that I'm going downtown for an hour or two to-day." He saw her little hands clinch until the knuckles stood out white and hard against the firm pink of her flesh, and hurried to explain: "Hunt writes me that he wants to buy my seat on the Exchange. He's establishing a couple of branches, and thinks that the firm needs another floor member to handle its increased business. He'll pay a good price, so I'm going down to sell to him."

"You're—you're not—" she faltered.

"No, no; I'm not going to go into the market, at all. I'm through with all that; it's behind me. I'm merely going to sever the last tie that binds me to the Street."

"You promised, you know," she reminded him, dubiously, for she knew his weakness—being the man's wife—and what hold the Street had upon him, and she was afraid that he might prove an easy prey to temptation.

"I promised, sweetheart," he assented, again laughing, "and I give you my word again."

And with that pledge sealed warm upon his lips, she let him go; not, however, without misgivings stirring deep in her heart.

And Steele went rather gladly than otherwise; to tell the truth, it was something to do. Of late he had begun to feel his idleness rather keenly; the subtraction of the Street from his life had left a void in his days; he was a shadow, with empty hands, moving aimlessly among shadows; who had been a man, fighting among men. He felt that his sole excuse for existence had come to be his wealth. It was not a grateful thought.

But once in the Elevated train, bound downtown, he forgot that in the interest aroused by a prominent article on the financial page of his newspaper. It was one of those rare, infrequent accounts which sometimes see the light, written by an "insider," an expert, detailing with fine insight just what motives were then actuating the bear element in the furious raid it was making upon industrial securities. In particular, Steele

gathered that the clique headed by Tom West, his dearest rival of the old days, was hammering Tennessee Rope & Twine. Steele considered such action immoral; West, he allowed, was a natural-born pessimist in regard to stock values, but that was no excuse for his making T. R. & T. his shining mark. Steele happened to know a good deal concerning that stock and the concern which fathered it, and he was quite convinced that it was sound—worth all of par. Moreover, he held a large block of T. R. & T. as an income investment; it annoyed him to have the market value of his investment depreciated.

Now, if he were back in the Street, he would find a way to convince West and his crowd of their mistake. But

Steele sighed. He found much, indeed, to induce a feeling of depression; throughout all of his trip he was conscious of a curious, unhappy sensation of utter detachment from his surroundings. The throng on the busy block between Nassau Street and Broadway eddied about him without even a gleam of recognition illuminating one of the faces that momentarily peered into his, then passed. He was elbowed, hustled, shouldered out of the way like driftwood in a swirl of a torrent; with a pang he realized that he was at last become a "rank outsider."

He was forgotten—already. The Street is a fickle mistress. Even his newsdealer in the Empire Building arcade stared blankly in Steele's face when he paused to buy some publication he did not want, for old times' sake. To crown all, Hunt happened to be out for the morning.

Steele went downstairs from Hunt's office, feeling, he proclaimed glumly, "like a loose tooth." He stood for a while staring desolately at the sculptures on the Broad Street façade of the new Exchange Building. He hardly gave them a thought, however; his mind was occupied in grasping the fact of his complete dissociation from the body financial.

The morning air was alive with the promise of spring, clear, sharp, stirring.

Beyond the purple shadow of the Mills Building the sunlight danced, a golden shimmer wherein the curb market seethed in riot. Beyond that, on the western curb of Broad Street, a light-blue mob of messenger boys besieged a serried array of push carts. Both sidewalks and the best part of the roadway were alive with a pushing crowd of pedestrians, hastening about the multifarious concerns of the Street.

Steele saw, envied, sighed deeply, the meanest eight-dollar-per-week clerk was an integral part of the machinery of which Steele had once been an engineer; who was now a mere, useless onlooker. A bank messenger, an adolescent youth puffing a clumsy pipe, swelling with the consciousness of his importance, in passing bumped Steele into the gutter and hurried on without a backward glance. Steele glared after him—and forgave him on the spot.

"You're right, son," he said, forlornly; "I'm only in the way."

Suddenly he found himself making for the door of the Exchange; almost without his own volition he pushed them aside and entered the lobby. There he stood, for a moment agast. What had he done? What right had he there? Then he remembered that he had every right, as yet; his seat was still his own, the freedom of the floor his. Why not go in and see what "the boys" were about? Perhaps he might win a friendly smile, at least; and he fairly ached for a word of welcome, a sign he was not forgotten.

Absent-mindedly he deposited his coat in the cloak room, and strolled out upon the floor of the Exchange. The shuffle and stamp of the thousands of shifting feet and the high yelping uproar rang in Steele's ears like the overture of a familiar opera. Unconsciously his step became more firm, his manner brisk and assured; and his eyes lit with the light of battle.

But he held himself with a firm hand, watching the floor jealously with a comprehending eye. In a moment he observed that there was undue excitement about the T. R. & T. post, and went over to see what it all meant.

He arrived at a critical moment. The West clique was undoubtedly pounding the industrial more than it merited. Several points had already been lopped off the day's opening price. Steele discovered the fact, frowning stern disapproval. There seemed to be little or no buying, although a reaction was bound to come. West's crowd was selling short and would have to buy in to cover before very long, thereby causing a rally; a far-seeing man would seize upon this opportunity.

Hollwedel, board member of West's firm, plunging back from a consultation with his partner by telephone, spied Steele. The latter's hat was suddenly smashed down over his ears. He pushed it up, laughing, to see Hollwedel standing before him, offering a welcoming hand.

"Howdy, Steele?" he panted. "You back? Glad to see you. Sell you a thousand Rope & Twine at 65," he added, almost in jest.

"Done!" cried Steele, mechanically, as though he had suddenly wakened from a dream.

Seemingly by magic he found a pad and pencil in his hand; he never knew how he had acquired them. Scrawling a memorandum on the top sheet, he came back at Hollwedel right manfully. "Got any more?" He was accommodated to the extent of another thousand shares, at 64 $\frac{1}{4}$. Sara? He never gave her a thought. The wine of battle coursed through his veins. His word forgotten, he hurried to the telephone to apprise Hunt & Wilde: that he was again trading, then hurled himself back into the thick of the fray, to the rescue of the abused Tennessee Rope & Twine. For a few minutes he bought right and left, regardless of consequence, then settled down to a more sane method of procedure.

A whisper stole around the room: "Steele's back—buying Rope & Twine. Must have an inside tip." Others, so believing, began to buy. West's associates became alarmed; they had anticipated a reaction, but not so early in the day. They launched ten thousand shares at the market, which soaked them

up as greedily as a sponge. They decided that it would be policy to cover without delay, at a loss if necessary, and the consequent buying orders caused the rally to become an irresistible upward surge.

The close of the day's trading found Steele sitting on one of the wall seats, tired, happy, perturbed. He had had a glorious debauch; he had demonstrated the fallacy of West's reasoning; had turned the tables on him; and he had bought something like twenty-five thousand shares of Tennessee Rope & Twine. His profits were handsome enough, on paper, but he did not care to hold the stock as an investment, and he would have to feed it to the market by dribblets in order to avoid a fall in price. And—Sara? He was beginning to remember her. He would have to spend the following day or two on the floor. But how was he to explain his defection to his wife?

And at that moment Tausig was announcing to Belden, in their private office, "I hear Steele's back on the floor."

"He is, eh?" Belden licked his thin lips, glancing furtively at his partner. "Oh, he is back at last, is he?" he said again, with meaning, tracing an invisible diagram on his blotter with his pen. "Why, I'm glad to hear it!"

Tausig did not doubt his sincerity.

To Steele's relief his prolonged absence of the day before had passed unnoticed; at least, Mrs. Steele made no comment. But, as he rose from the breakfast table he felt that the moment for an explanation was at hand. Her eye was upon him, and he was fain to avoid it.

"I am sorry, dear," he said, uneasily, "but I must go downtown again to-day. I—I have to consult with Morton." He named his lawyer. It was not strictly untrue; he did mean to see Morton, for a minute or two, if he found time.

"You have sold your seat?" she asked, abruptly.

"I—er—Hunt was not ready yesterday. It'll be settled in a day or so."

As yet he shrank from the lie direct, but the following day a new subterfuge

must be invented; he dared not tell her the truth.

"I find," he said glibly—having thought it out beforehand, during a sleepless portion of the night—"that I will have to spend several days—perhaps a week—at the office. A matter has cropped up requiring my attention."

"I understood that Mr. Hunt had arranged everything by your instructions, using your power of attorney."

"I had—er—forgotten this matter—due to my illness perhaps."

He made his escape, guiltily conscious of the dismay that was daily growing in her eyes, the sorrow, the reproach. That she suspected, he could not disbelieve. How much she knew, he hesitated to estimate. He grew very unhappy, even as her unhappiness became evident in her manner. He had never before found it necessary to deceive her.

How would it work out? Steele failed to foresee. The reformed tippler had broken the pledge; the first drink had left him with a hot and arid throat. Steele had never suspected before this what magnetic power of attraction speculation held for him. It was like a fever—the gambling fever; he could not now withhold his hand from the market, for the life of him.

A week passed. The issue grew, became as a wall between the man and the woman. Finally it might no longer be evaded.

"I'm involved in the market," he told her, surlily, with a dogged air.

"Jim!"

He cringed.

"I—I can't help it, Sara—it's beyond helping now. I'm sorry, but I saw the chance, I thought, to make a few thousands and——"

"But, Jim!" He looked quickly away from the pain in her eyes; he would not have witnessed it, knowing that he had caused it, for worlds. "But, Jim, you—you gave me your word!"

"I know, I——" He floundered miserably under her accusing gaze. "But it can't be helped. In a few days—a week, at the outside—I hope to have it all fixed. And that will be the end. Sara!"

She did not answer; Steele's primal impression was that she was refusing to listen. Then he saw that she was, for the instant, unable to give him her attention.

She had pushed back her chair, as though intending to rise; on the contrary, she seemed held down, as though by an invisible hand—struggling vainly. She had turned from him, averting her face; Steele could see no more than the full curve of her cheek; and that whitened to a pallor beneath his gaze. Unconsciously her left hand went toward the region of her heart, clutching at the folds of her morning gown.

Steele hurried toward her.

"Sara!" he cried a second time. "Is—is it your heart, dear—the old trouble?"

His voice seemed to rouse her; the hand dropped to her side, she sat up determinedly in her chair, then warned him away from her with a little, weary gesture. Steele bent toward her in an agony of solicitude.

"The old heart trouble?" he demanded. But she refused to credit him with the anxiety with which his tone was charged.

"Yes," she said, faintly. "It—it's gone, now. I am all right."

"I'll send for Dr. Dexter, at once," he proposed.

"It is unnecessary." She rose, coldly ignoring his proffered arm. He followed her toward the door. "He was here yesterday. I tell you—it is nothing. Now, go on—go to the office. I am all right."

"But——"

"Go," she insisted, drearily. "Don't pretend to worry about me. I——"

"But I will not go!" he cried. "At least, until I know——"

"It is getting late," she reminded him, quietly. "The Exchange opens within an hour. You had best go at once. Don't think of me—think of the money you have involved."

He had no answer. It was true—he had no choice but to consider the money; his presence upon the floor at the opening was an imperative necessity. While he hesitated, considering that

phase of the case, she brushed past him and left the room. Steele started after her, paused, reconsidered—and left the house, muttering to himself.

Where before he had gone to the market as a man desiring a stimulant, now he plunged into the turmoil on the floor as he would have swallowed an opiate; it would deaden his sensibilities, help him to forget her face as she had last looked upon him.

And the market received him with open arms. He was indeed deeply concerned by now; more than half the fortune upon which he had thought to retire was at stake. Sometimes a doubt assailed him; had his old, sure judgment failed him at the last? Was this, his final throw upon the table, to prove the ruin of the once successful gamester?

Since that first day, when he had turned the flurry in Tennessee Rope & Twine into a rise, he had been drawn more and more deeply into the toils. West's combination, finding that they had but one man to fight, had recovered their lost confidence and renewed their raid upon the security; Steele had attempted to peg the price against a further drop, and had all but succeeded when West received unexpected support from Belden; under the impact of the thirty thousand shares which Belden hurled bodily at the market, T. R. & T. had broken sharply, closing at the end of Steele's second day at 62—three points below the price at which he had purchased.

Since that, despite Steele's utmost efforts, the decline had been slow but steady. On this last day he held thirty-five thousand shares, bought at an average price of 60; and T. R. & T. was quoted at 51.

Steele simply could not afford to swallow the loss. He flung himself into the market desperately, making use of every device known to him to stop the slump—to no purpose, it seemed. The bear element controlled the market; the public—always "bullish"—had lost confidence and could not be tempted to buy.

On the opening, Rope & Twine broke three points. Steele's support fell away from him. For a while he felt as though

stunned. Then came a slight reaction, due to covering by the shorts. Steele, encouraged, strove to better the advantage. It proved to be a momentary thing, however; again the price began to scale, point by point, slowly, surely.

And Belden, in his office, smiled grimly at the reports brought him by his lieutenants, smiled yet more heartlessly as he thought of the final blow he was preparing to deal.

The floor was in tumult. To Steele it seemed that at least two-thirds of the traders were engaged in the struggle that raged about the T. R. & T. post. Steele himself, Hollwedel and Belden's broker were the storm centers, around whom revolved a howling mob of frantic brokers, red-faced and wild-eyed all and all perspiring, brandishing aloft their arms, threatening one another with their pads and pencils, pushing, crushing this way and that, surging to and fro, shouting, yelling, shrieking—chanting a monotonous dirge of a hundred notes and but one word, that filled all four marble walls of the great room to its golden ceiling with one never-ending cry of "Sell! Sell! Sell!"

And if one dared bleat "Buy!" he was overwhelmed by an instant onslaught. Steele felt that hours passed thus, while he strained his ears to catch a change, however slight, in the insistent iteration of "Sell! Sell! Sell!" And in the end, when at length it came, he hardly knew it; for he had lost heart and his head and was raving in unison with his fellows.

And then, just as he began to realize that the tide was turning, some one thrust a telegram in his face. He never knew who it was. At first he refused to notice it, but it was thrust at him persistently. Finally he was forced to comprehend that the message was for him. He seized it, and somehow the envelope was torn away from it. He backed up against the post and held it up before his eyes, trying to steady himself. The words danced madly; it was some time before he grasped their import.

"Your wife is dying. Come home at once."
"DEXTER."

The shock seemed, in a way, to deaden all his senses. Steele fancied that a great stillness fell upon the room; he knew that men moved about him, saw them glaring at him fixedly with innumerable eyeballs, bloodshot and expressionless; he saw their arms waving, but he heard no sound. After what seemed a very long time he heard their voices, rising and falling faintly, like the surge of a distant sea; and high above it all he heard his own voice, strangely shrill and thin, crying very bitterly, "What am I doing here?"

What, indeed, did he in that place? His wife lay dying; why was he not by her side? Because he had broken faith with her; because he had broken the word he had given to the woman he loved; because he had sullied his honor, and flouted her love for him and her confidence in him. And for what? For his own selfish ends, for the passing hour of intoxication in the delirium of the floor.

His fortune stood at stake. But what did it matter? What was money to him—life even—without her? Men pressed about him like a wall—determined men without understanding. But he lowered his head, sprang at them, bucked a way through them by main strength and carelessness of consequence, fighting like a madman.

Presently he was in Broad Street—hatless, his coat ripped up his back, his collar lying about his neck a sodden pulp of linen, one sleeve hanging from the shoulder almost by a single thread. And it was raining, a steady furious downpour of April. He hardly was conscious of it. He found a cab, mainly by intuition; he could not have been said to have seen it; and jumped in, bellowing large promises to the cabby.

She was reading, or had been, when he staggered into her room. She arose suddenly from her chair, and the book crashed on the floor; she gave a little, startled cry, and one hand went tentatively toward her heart. Her face was very white and apparently drawn, and Steele saw that she had been crying.

"Why, Jim!" she said.

"You're—you're all right?" he gasped, incredulously.

"Yes," she told him, wondering.

She came towards him slowly, hesitating, bewildered.

"Then," he said, after an interval, "what does this mean?"

He extended his hand, opening his fingers: a little ball of yellow paper rested in his palm, damp with its moisture.

"Read it," he said, impatiently.

She unfolded it, read it with a growing wonder, then looked up at him.

"I do not know," she said, with what seemed an effort, "what it means."

"You are all right, sweetheart? You are not ill?"

"At present, not in the least."

He pondered the problem, scowling.

"Thank God," he whispered, once or twice. And finally he straightened up, with a single cry: "Belden!" He had fathomed the mystery.

"An enemy sent it to me," he explained, sitting down heavily. "It was handed to me on the floor of the Exchange. So I came—at once." He attempted a smile, but without signal success. "At once," he repeated, drearily. "Thank God!"

"You did that for me, Jim?" she said, softly. "For me? And I did not think you cared so much!"

"I did not know how much I cared," he replied, "until—that— There is nothing without you," he stated with conviction: "I did not know."

"Dear heart!" And, after a little while: "Did it do great harm, dear? Have you lost much?"

"About half of what I had," he calculated. "It is no matter. Let them keep it. There will still be enough—with you to share it."

"There will be enough," she whispered, happily.

"I am done with the Street," he stated; and this time his pledge convinced her, for he himself was convinced. "The Street had taken back half of that which it gave me," he added. "I'm content—with you. The Street can keep it."

But it was not so bad as he believed.

THE BACHELOR

By T. W. H. Crossland

Author of "The Unspeakable Scot," Etc.

A BACHELOR is an enemy to the state, and a rogue of the first water.

And by a bachelor I mean an unmarried marriageable man, who refuses to marry.

Such an one always goes softly. He is snug. He has money in the funds. In winter he keeps himself very warm, his waistcoats being of wool, and his overcoats thick. He smiles perennially. He buys everybody a little book for a Christmas present.

Also he wears puce ties and flannel next the body and he is a fat-head. He worships the women, and being fools the women dote on him. He takes them out to dinner and giggles with them. Knowing him for what he is, they spread out their tall feathers before him, and he grins and appears to think, and clings to his condition. He has weighed the pros and cons of the whole question, and he is adamant.

You cannot take him with lure, gin, springs, or other engine. Sap, siege and parallel find him always well on the safe side of another bastion. Pairs of sparkling eyes cannot move him. Little squeezes of the hand, scroodlings up, pretty whispers and all other bedevilments are just as ineffective. He can go into the sun without getting sunstroke. He will amuse himself a-May-ing with any man's daughter, or for that matter, with any man's wife, and he declines to be serious, which, in view of the silliness of some of the sillier matrons, is fortunate. He is the steady marvel of lovers, and enjoys the unmitigated contempt of husbands and fathers.

"Lucky dog!" sigh the lovers.

"Why doesn't the fellow marry?" sniff the husbands and fathers. And the bachelor twinkles and twinkles, and keeps on being single like grim death.

If peradventure you reprove him, he has a stock of excellent answers, all of them reflecting obvious credit upon himself. Deficiency of income is one of his great standbys. Why should he drag some sweet woman into penury and squalor and narrowness? Why indeed? Emphatically no man should marry until he has got just a little more money than the bachelor has got. It is self-denial pure and simple that keeps him unwived.

Then there is the sigh and faithfulness to a lost love argument. "Once, dear boy, I met a woman. Here's to her memory. She is now a saint in Heaven or married to a stock jobber. There can be no other woman in the world for me."

He swallows something. You grip his hand and look upon him with tender and understanding eyes. And the bachelor has some more Grand Marnier, and goes off to a music hall. Truly a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

Or at a pinch there is the mild, "Why should I?" which on the whole rather disconcerts you. For while it is the duty of every man to marry it is always difficult to give a man good reasons for adventuring. Common candor compels you to admit that when the bachelor looks you in the eye and says, "Why?" he has rather got you. If you say to him that it is a plain and sacred duty, he has merely to reply that he

doesn't think so. If you paint in glowing colors the joys, comforts and advantages of the happy estate he has merely to smile, and you perceive that he knows that you know that you are not speaking with absolute sincerity.

Indeed, to spread the net in sight of the bachelor is sheer vanity, and it is vanity also to spread it in his absence. From the beginning of time he has been a giddy, whirling, alluring sample of a man with an ultimate prudence about him which is simply colossal. Any woman who has done a little flirting, or a little matchmaking, will tell you that the bachelor is her despair. The out and out misogynist may be captured if you will spend time on him, but you cannot capture the bachelor in an eternity. Unless you take sheer delight in the chase as a chase he is best left alone. Accept his smiles, his flowers, his dinners, his theater tickets, and eke his little books at Christmas. Giggle with him, dance with him, and gad about with him, but as you value your happiness do not attempt to marry him.

I have noticed that in the books it is usual to set down the bachelor's true inwardness as selfishness. Women particularly are prone to attribute most things that a man does to selfishness incarnate. For my own part I do not think that taking them as a body, bachelors are more selfish than any other kind of man. The real truth about the non-marrying "men who so cumber the ground" in these decadent days is that they have no serious side to them. Before he can bring himself to marry the modern woman, it is necessary that the modern man should have gone clean, stark, staring mad with love of her. And the bachelor is so soulless and so brainless that it is impossible for him to go clean, stark, staring mad, either for love or anything else.

Hence nothing in the world can bring him to the point. He is a man, he has sympathies and affections, and warm blood in his veins. But he is so confoundedly sane and equable that a grand passion is quite beyond him. So for years and years he will drift about the

social duck pond, glossy, sleek, well-fed, careless, debonair, and full of quack, and until his plumage fades the women will admire him, and be puzzled with him, and think he is a dear. But it is the nemesis of his coldness, his passionlessness and his prettiness, that there will come a time when he will be very sorry for himself, and wonder what he has done that he should have been so cruelly left out of the happy hurly-burly which is life.

It is a sad commentary on the character of contemporary man that the bachelor among us is yearly becoming numerically stronger. The system of education imposed upon the youth of this country by their mammas tends to make fools and bachelors as plentiful as blackberries. You are taught not to kick over the traces in any conceivable circumstances. If you take the lesson to heart you become in time morally and physically incapable of kicking over the traces. You become so decorous, and you get such a control on yourself, that it is impossible for you to be other than decorous and self-controlled. And as love, courtship and marriage are pretty much to-day what they have always been, namely: none too decorous or controlled matters, they are clearly not intended for you. It is impossible to go through a courtship in the same way as you could go through a figure in the minuet. No amount of art or philosophy will make the course of true love run smooth. Indeed, love in a man is like the month of March, it comes in like a lion even though it go out like a lamb. And it is just because he can never be a lion that the modern bachelor must always be a bachelor. Bad luck to him say I whoever he be.

The bachelor about whom the majority of us have heard most is not exactly the creature I have endeavored to portray. People used to talk of him about the time of Dickens as "an old bachelor." In certain Dickensiated circles the old bachelor is still the only kind of bachelor that people can imagine. He is commonly supposed to be a somewhat pathetic person. He wears musty clothes, he has spindle shanks, his face

is "seamed and furrowed," his pate is bald, and he is devoted to whist. He is believed to have off by heart a piece of prose called "Dream Children," he lives sparingly and saves money, and he makes an excellent godfather.

To this brand of bachelor, it is well to offer assiduous civilities. He is so lonely, and there is nobody to whom he can leave his money. Speaking broadly, however, I feel that the Dickensy bachelor is dying out. He may exist benightedly here and there, but in the main he is exceedingly hard to find. In the place of him we have that rather portly, hard living, gleeful unmarried gentleman, who is sometimes called by his intimates "a jolly old cock." Instead of being meager, seedy, snuffy and out at elbows, the old cock is nothing if not a buck and lively and fashionable. Nobody knows how he has escaped matrimony, inasmuch as he is always a most gallant man. Women apparently are the abiding charm of his life. He beams in their society, relishes their conversation, and simply does not know how to criticise them. If he were a little younger, the sweet creatures would undoubtedly set their cap at him.

But alas, age has marked him for her own, and his stoutness makes him wheeze in the chest. Nevertheless he is a delightful man. The women say so, and on the strength of it he is not above being useful to them. He will take the children to the circus for you with a great deal of pleasure. Or he will call and have nursery tea with them when you are away from home, and advise you as to their health and welfare.

Or when owing to the uncontrollableness of circumstances you are hard put to it for a best man or a benevolent person to attend a funeral for you, the jolly old cock is invariably at your service, and will do what you require of him with amazing dignity.

Of course, if he were a married man these and the like exercises would not be permitted to him. His better half would see to that, beside which he would see to it himself. For an old married man is far from jolly, utterly devoid of benevolence, and lost to all sense of dignity. We have it on the best authority that it takes all sorts to make a world, and that no doubt if there were no bachelors the world would not be as interesting to women as it is.

For all that I do not like them. They are not men at all. There is no skilling them, you can never quite make out what they live for, you can never be quite sure that they are human. I am afraid the real truth about them is that they are undersized men.

You never hear of a bachelor doing great things in the world. At any rate he is usually outstripped by the married men. Napoleon was a married man. So were Shakespeare and Dr. Johnson. It breaks one's heart to think of it, but it is the truth. There never was a bachelor who could rival Shakespeare or Dr. Johnson.

I can imagine the women being hugely pleased with our last few sentences. But let them not hug themselves too closely. It is a man's greatness that makes him marry, not his marrying that makes him great.



DEFIANCE

I WALKED in dreams the while that Chance
 Disposed us in a common path;
 The lotus ate and tasted bliss,
 Nor feared the bitter aftermath!

T. H. SYMES.

OUT OF HER SPHERE

By Owen Oliver

IT was a sunny morning and warm for December when the letter came.

I was racing Pompey round the garden, and father was laughing at us out of the window instead of writing his sermon. He is the Rev. Chas. Thorne, M. A., rector of Croon-near-Carylon, and I am Esmé. I was eighteen last summer.

"It's from the castle, miss," the postman said; "knowed 'un by the big crest."

I ran across the lawn and gave it to father at the window.

"I hope they don't want you at Christmas time," I said. The duke is patron of the living, and he often asks father to preach at the castle chapel when they are there.

"No-o." Father wrinkled his forehead at the letter, then he looked at the torn envelope. "They want you, my dear. The letter is addressed to *Miss Thorne*, I see."

"Me! Why they wouldn't know me if they saw me!" I had been finishing my education abroad, and had not seen any of the people at the castle for two years.

"Anyhow the duchess asks you there for Christmas. I don't want to part with you, but we must see what mother says."

Mother said it was a great opportunity, and of course I must go, but she worried a great deal about my clothes.

"I don't know what duchesses expect people to wear," she complained. "I shall write and ask your Cousin Esmé. *She* will tell us."

Cousin Esmé is Uncle John's daughter. He made a fortune in America,

and left it all to her, so she is in society. I did not know her myself, but she had stayed with father and mother while I was away. They said she might almost be my twin in looks, and they liked her very much. Instead of answering the letter she sent a dressmaker down with a great box of dresses and hats. I was delighted with the fine things, but I was sorry to leave home at Christmas time.

I went to Carylon Castle by train. They sent a carriage to meet me, with a real footman, and there was quite a row of them—footmen I mean—in the hall. I felt rather nervous till I saw the duchess. Then, I did not mind, because she was just a nice, good-looking old lady, with white hair, and dressed like anybody else.

"Why!" she cried. "You aren't Esmé Thorne!" She put up her eyeglasses and looked at me. Then she suddenly smiled. "Ah! Of course! You'll think me a rude old woman to stare at you so; but you've grown, you know." She patted my shoulder and laughed. "You haven't brought a maid, have you?"

"I haven't one," I confessed.

"Then you shall have Perkins."

She rang the bell and gave directions, and presently a pleasant girl came and took me to my room. She was very nice and did not seem to look down upon me, as I thought a lady's maid would. She did my hair in a wonderful way for dinner, and got some flowers from the conservatory to put in my dress. I thanked her for taking so much trouble, but she said it was a pleasure to dress a young lady who looked so nice.

Lord Moreby took me in to dinner. He is the only son, and he had just come

back from Australia. He had been a backwoodsman for three years, he told me. I knew that people said he was wild, but he was quite civilized with me. We talked about dogs and horses, and he offered to teach me to drive tandem, if I wasn't nervous. I said I was not nervous with horses, only with lords and ladies, and great people, and he laughed very much. *He* was nervous with clever young ladies, who had learned everything at school, he said. Of course I knew he was only teasing me.

There were a great many people there, and most of them were lords or ladies, or "honorables." So when they had music after dinner I said that I did not play or sing very well, but I found that they did not do it any better than other people. So I let Lord Moreby persuade me to try. I am better at music than at anything else, and they made me sing "Seventeen" twice. I dare say you know the words?

"The world, they say, is growing gray,
But I am young.
Its tales are told, its songs are old—
But mine's unsung.
It's full of fears, and cares, and tears—
But I've a smile.
Let sighs and sorrow come to-morrow—
I'll laugh a while.

"At Cupid's best I hear them jest—
But I am dumb.
Man's a rover, love's soon over—
But mine's to come.
The foolish tale of love is stale—
But I am new.
Dear love to be, there's you for me—
And I for you!"

"And is he yet to seek, Miss Esmé?" Lord Moreby asked, when he took me out into the conservatory to see the flowers. I laughed and held up my hand to show that there was no engagement ring, and he laughed, too.

"Cupid begins at the heart," he said, "not at the finger."

"Does *he*? You know all about him. I haven't begun to learn."

"You've begun to teach," he declared. He looked at me so hard that I felt myself beginning to blush. So I changed the subject to his tandem, and he

promised to give me a lesson the next morning.

It was not very easy, because the leader wanted to dance on his hind legs, and pulled so, but Lord Moreby held my hands, and helped me, and said I should soon learn, if I had a lesson every morning. He taught me billiards, too. I was not good at that, and he said I should require a lot of instruction. I found out that he could sing, so we learned a duet, and sang it after dinner. The lords and ladies were not very different from other people, I found. Some of the gentlemen were very attentive to me, but I like Lord Moreby best. I thought it was strange that he had not got married, but the duchess told me that he had never seemed to take much interest in women, and that I was quite an exception.

"I expect it is because I am not really grown up," I said, "and he can tease me."

"You mustn't mind his teasing, dear," she said.

"Of course not!" I told her. "He doesn't tease *too* much."

The next day was Christmas eve. He gave me more lessons in driving and billiards, and we went for quite a long walk before dinner to see if the pond was really freezing, so that we could skate. We had a nice talk coming back. We began with bocks and went on to ourselves. It wasn't because he didn't like women that he hadn't got engaged, he explained, but because he thought he could like the right one so much if he ever found her. He wished he could, because his people wanted him to marry on account of the title. He did not speak of them as if they were a duke and duchess, but as "the governor" and "the dear old mater."

"I can't marry anyone I don't love, Esmé," he said, "even for the title."

"Of course not," I said, "but can't you manage to fall in love with somebody?"

"I dare say I could," he admitted, "but it doesn't follow that she would fall in love with me."

I thought she would be very silly if she did not, but I did not tell him that.

"You could be very nice to her," I suggested, "and teach her things, like you do me."

"She might not be so 'new' and nice to teach as you, little Esmé," he said.

"She ought to be older and more sensible, and not want such a lot of teaching," I told him, but he said he shouldn't care for her then. He squeezed my hand when we said good-bye. I thought it was a good thing I wasn't staying very long, and made up my mind to be very careful not to fall in love with him, because he was "out of my sphere," and it would never do.

I think I made up my mind a little too late. On Christmas morning I did not go to church, because he asked me to help him superintend the decorations. When they were done he offered to give me another lesson in driving. The horses were very fresh, and he had to hold my hands very tightly. Even then they bolted, and we nearly ran into a ditch, and a wall. I was frightened, and clung to his arm, and when he had pulled them up he put his arm round me.

"Esmé!" he whispered. "My darling! My little darling. I love you—love you!"

I was all in a flutter and I felt very red and silly, but I told him that he mustn't think of such a thing, because he was a lord and I was only a girl, but he kissed me and made me tell him that I loved him. I couldn't help saying it because it was the truth.

He declared that his father and mother would be delighted, but I did not think so. I felt dreadfully shy, and after lunch I crept away to the library, and sat in the window seat, behind the curtains, reading a book. At least I had a book, but I did not read it much, because I kept wondering how long it would be before he came and found me.

While I was sitting there, Lady Kenley and Mrs. Groome came in. I did not want them to see me, so I sat very still and then I heard them speaking about Esmé Thorne. I can't remember their exact words, for I felt bewildered, but it came to this—that they thought I was my cousin, and the duchess had

asked me there because I was a good match for her son.

"And really," Lady Kenley said, "if poor Reginald *must* marry money, he might do worse. She's quite a presentable little thing, and distinctly clever. I've never seen anyone play the *ingénue* better!"

"I think he's really smitten with her, do you know," Mrs. Groome stated.

"Ye-es?" Lady Kenley laughed. "He wouldn't have let himself be smitten if she'd been penniless, I fancy."

I did not know how to keep from screaming out aloud. I do not believe all that people say, but I felt sure that the duchess had taken me for my cousin, because she was so puzzled when she saw me. Of course she had written to Esmé at our house, forgetting that there was such a person as me.

As soon as they had gone, I went up to my room and lay down. I had a dreadful headache and I wanted to cry, but I could not. When Perkins came up to get my things out, she bathed my forehead with *eau de cologne*, and I asked her if she thought the duchess would mind if I asked her to come and see me. She said she would come and see me without asking as soon as she knew I was poorly, and she did. I sat up on the bed and spoke to her before she was hardly in the door.

"It is all a mistake," I cried, breathlessly. "You thought I was Esmé Thorne, the heiress, but I'm not. I'm Esmé Thorne, daughter of the rector of Croon. We haven't any money—not what *you* would call anything. Will you let me go away to-night without anybody knowing, please?"

The duchess stared at me for a moment. Then she almost ran to the bed and took me in her arms.

"You *dear* little thing!" she said. "It *was* a mistake, but as for letting you go—why, we're all in love with you. You'll just stop here!"

Then she kissed me, and I put my arms round her neck, and cried as if my heart was broken. I think it was very nearly.

"You don't understand," I sobbed. "I didn't know that you didn't know, and

your son proposed to me!" Then I explained how I heard.

"And what did you say to my boy, Esmé?" she asked.

"I said 'yes,' of course."

She took my face in her hands.

"Why, of course, Esmé?"

"Because I love him. Please let me go to-night."

The duchess pursed her lips and looked very thoughtful. Then she sighed.

"I will be frank with you, my dear child," she said. "There *was* some one I had hoped Reginald would marry. I do not mean your cousin, that was idle gossip. Some one who would have helped him in a career." She sighed again. "However, if he loves you—"

"There is no 'however,'" I told her, "It is all a mistake. I shall not marry him. You will let me go to-night?"

"You *can't* go to-night, dear. It is out of the question. People would talk so. I am sure your mother would say the same. Be a brave girl, and come down to dinner to-night, and look your best. To-morrow you shall do as you please, but—"

"There is no 'but,'" I said. "I am as proud in my way as you are in yours. No, forgive me! You are *so* kind. You understand what I mean, don't you? I *will* be brave, and come to dinner. Only don't let him sit next to me. I couldn't bear it, and you'll let me say I have a headache, and go to bed directly after dinner, won't you?"

"If you still wish it, dear, but—"

"*Nothing* will persuade me," I said firmly, and she sighed again and went.

I think I looked my best that evening because I was flushed and excited. Perkins said that I looked perfectly lovely, but, of course, she was prejudiced, because she liked me. Lord Moreby did not sit in his usual place, but on his mother's right hand, and I was on the duke's right. I knew that they wanted to honor me, and I thought it was very kind, and just like them. I did not feel angry with them for wanting Lord Moreby to marry some one in his own sphere, because it was quite natural and right.

I managed to laugh and chat all through dinner, and the duke was exceedingly kind to me. When the dessert came he rose up to make a speech, I knew he always did on Christmas evening.

"My dear friends," he began, and everyone was suddenly silent. "My very dear friends. It has been my privilege for many years—for more years than I quite care to remember—to propose a triple toast on Christmas evening. The first toast has never varied. It never will vary. It is just the old Christmas wish—every happiness to all here at this kindly season; every happiness through the New Year, and through many new years."

He raised his glass and everyone drank and smiled at everyone else. Some of them called one another's names across the table. Lord Moreby called "Esmé!" I lifted my glass steadily and bowed to him, and I prayed a little prayer that he *might* have all the happiness that could be.

Then the duke went on.

"The second toast has not changed in words. It has changed—alas!—in meaning. It has changed because *we* have changed. I am older than the rest of *you*. I have more memories of those dear ones who have sat here. We would rather have a moment's sadness in our rejoicing than forget them— To the memories of those who were our friends— Ah! They are still our friends."

He raised his glass, and everyone drank in silence. Then he cleared his voice and smiled.

"The third toast had changed from year to year. It has always been our privilege to welcome some fresh face among us; some little one grown up; some valued new friend. The guest of honor this evening is Miss Esmé Thorne." He put his hand on my shoulder. "She will sit here among us for many Christmas evenings, I trust. Some day—we all hope far distant—she will sit where my dear wife now sits. I have the honor and pleasure to announce her engagement to my son, and to invite you to drink their happiness."

Everything that happened after that

is like a dream. But I know that I found Reg beside me holding my hand, and when the ladies got up, the duchess took me away for a few minutes to a room by ourselves.

"Forgive us, dear," she said. "I was so afraid you would go as you threatened, and I wanted to make it impossible. You see I am a mother as well as a 'proud duchess,' Esmé, and my boy loves you. I hope you will always be as happy as you look now."

"I am happy," I said. "Only I wish

he had known who I was when—I mean this morning." She laughed.

"I told him the night you came!" she said.

"But you didn't think he would be so foolish! I don't believe I shall ever make a grand lady."

"My dear," she said, "you will make a good wife to my son."

I think of that when people say: "So you are going to marry a title, Esmé!"

"No," I tell them, "I am going to marry *him*!"



ESTRANGED

TWO strangers, from opposing poles,
Meet in the torrid zone of Love:
And their desire seems set above
The limitation of their souls.

This is the trap; this is the snare;
This is the false, enchanting light;
And when it smoulders into night,
How can each know the other there?

They own no bond of common speech;
Each from far shores by whirlwinds brought,
Gropes for some cord of common thought
To draw the other within reach.

Each when the dark tide drowns their star,
Cries out: "Thou art not one with me!
One flesh we seemed when eye could see,
But now, how far thou art! How far!"

Each calling "Come! be mine! be wise,"
Stands obstinately in his place,
How can these two come face to face,
Till light spring from their meeting eyes?

Could both but once cry "Far thou art,
But I am coming!" How the beat
Of waves that part them would retreat,
Resurge, and find them, heart to heart!

E. NESBIT.

THE FATAL PROOFS

By Vincent Harper

Author of "The Exiles," Etc.

BY many signs and wonders the Infant felt in her bones that change was in the air.

Of course, the fact that in a few days she would be of age meant everything. Of age! What joy—to live and move and have her being without reference to the Dragon!

She had never seen the Dragon, it is only fair to him to state, but from earliest childhood she had chafed under the thought that nothing could be decided until the odious man—a total stranger living in England—had given his consent.

It was he who selected her school; it was he who "allowed" her fifty dollars a month pin money—as if any man knew what it cost to dress! When she left school; and it was he who browbeat Muzzy—"ventured to suggest," he called it—into selling the New York house, thereby compelling them to live the year round in Stockbridge, for Muzzy, dear, sentimental, submissive Muzzy, looked upon the Dragon as a sort of Special Providence, Limited.

To be quit of Mr. Lintott, the Dragon, and never, never, never again to be told to think "what he would say"; to have only big Brother Tom to wheedle when the exigencies of whim called for a "sundries" item in the budget; to appear never again as "the said Margaret Adele Marbury, infant," in those stupid papers that had had to be drawn, witnessed, signed and sealed whenever her dentist's bill was paid or her surplus income, for which she could have found so many uses, had to be invested; to be free, white, and twenty-one on four thousand a year of your

own, with no Dragon—ah! this was enough to spell change.

But if there is any reliance to be placed in bones, the "feeling" in those of the Infant portended more than mere emancipation; cataclysm, revolution, were writ large across the sky of the morrow, and goodness knows, at the close of the interminable winter at "The Evergreens" even the crack of doom would seem preferable to "just going on this way." To Muzzy and Kathleen, hibernating at Stockbridge was a blessed season of drawn-work, magazines, and visits from old Farmington girls who brought their drawn-work and tepid temperaments to contribute to the general fund of vacuity fondly referred to as "improving conversation."

Muzzy had her ends of being—seeing that the many lamps were filled *before* dark; that the butcher was telephoned to; and that the dusting was extended beyond the field of vision. Kathy was helpless, being twenty-seven and addicted to systematic reading, Home Study clubs, and experimenting in health foods, and finding justification for the existing universe in the subdued joy of attending the daily Lenten services. But to the Infant there were only two luminous spots in the dull gray negation of life: when Tom came, and when she herself went to New York.

Now, however, by many infallible signs, things were to be different. Tom's letters had suddenly taken on a tone of mystery, and Margery suspected that Muzzy was neck-deep in conspiracy with him, while Kathy and the rector and "people" seemed to treat her differently—more seriously or—some-

thing. But while she felt that the stars in their courses were about to fight for her, when she sought an answer to her inquiry for specific information among them, it was not given.

On the morning of the third day before her birthday, after a night of more than usual futile speculation, the Infant awoke with a creepy feeling of immediately impending revelation. Breakfast but heightened this feeling, for the grounds in the bottom of her coffee cup, if they meant anything, plainly foreshadowed "a letter from a stranger," while those in the second cup went even farther, prefiguring with quite thrilling exactness "a fortune in a parcel." That settled it! She must contrive to go to the post office herself and—if Muzzy and Kathy would only have their regular weekly headaches that day—she must go alone, because once a letter got into the house it became public property. Alas! To a craftily projected feeler in the shape of an airy and by-the-way suggestion that she had half a mind to walk into the village, Muzzy replied, cheerily, that she would go too—nothing like a brisk walk to prevent sick headache—and Kathy also agreed to be of the party if they would wait until it was time to go to Litany.

The effect of this was instantaneous and peculiar. The Infant at once saw in the situation the most positive corroboration of the coffee grounds, and lost no time in developing a scheme for eluding the enemy. She just must get "that letter"; and the "parcel" must be smuggled into the house. Whether she extended a casual visit to the stable into the two mile walk, or still more flagrantly violated the confidence reposed in her is uncertain, but it is certain that with a flushed face, looking especially piquant under her Tam o' Shanter, and with breathless eagerness, she asked the postmistress if there was anything for "The Evergreens."

There was. There were the usual papers and magazines; there was Kathy's stated communication from the Correspondence School of Belles-Lettres; and—of course, *the* letter for herself. And, of all things, it was from the Dragon,

who had never written to her in her whole life, and who had addressed her now as "Miss Margery Adele Marbury" minus "the Infant"!

Filled with increased respect for her bones and coffee grounds, the Infant was withdrawing into a corner for the purpose of reading the letter from the stranger, quite forgetting that the fortune in a parcel had failed to materialize, when the postmistress said through the little window:

"I beg your pardon, Miss Marbury, but here is a parcel for you."

Margery started. The long awaited hour of revelation was at hand. A letter from Tom, a letter from the Dragon, a letter from some photographer, and a parcel! Let him scoff who will at the premonitions of genius!

With incredible swiftness she formulated a theory. It proved to be correct, moreover, for after reading Tom's letter, she peeped into the little flat parcel, and discovered that it contained convincing proofs.

The proofs very properly settled the matter. This does not mean that logic, heretofore treated with deserved contempt, was at last to assert her sway over the Infant's mind, whose processes were free from the tyranny of reason, her conclusions being reached through direct revelation, and consequently being more positive than if they were the result of groveling before mere argument in the manner of man. Not at all. In fact, the proofs which now proved so compelling were not in the form of arguments, but consisted of sundry malodorous, brownish, rapidly fading unfinished portraits, bent upon curling up, which a photographer had sent to her for criticism, approval and selection.

Charity suggests passing over the manner and the means of Miss Marbury's entrance into the house, her explanations of her absence, and her reasons for an immediate flight up to her own room, behind whose closed door that portion of the mail which she forgot to allude to downstairs, was finally opened and carefully weighed.

Placing the proofs on her table, with books on the corners to keep them flat,

she addressed herself to the semi-delirious task of investigating the ominous phenomena.

The face in the proofs was the face of a stranger, but Tom's letter told who he was. It was the Dragon. Ye powers! this youngish man—not a day over thirty-five—with a chin that spoke of stubborn power, and a clear-cut profile strong and brave, and a great big bumpy, free, fine head, set firm on shoulders built to bear—this man who looked you through and through, and took your measure, and knew the truth; this masterful, fair, strong man was—Lintott! Linott, the Dragon!

Long and wonderingly she looked at him, and—oh, how the thought of it filled her with vague, dim dread and the strangest forebodings!—beyond all doubt this face was the handsomest, strongest, noblest, sweetest face she ever had seen!

But the thoughts of a girl are long, long thoughts, and it was not by the glance at a fading proof that the twist of a lifetime could be made straight. No! This man was a prisoner at the bar. He must show cause why she should not continue to believe him her Dragon. Manifestly the burden of proof was on him. So she summoned the several letters to testify.

The first witness called was the photographer, who deposed as follows:

"THE ROSETTI STUDIO, Fifth Avenue.

"MADAM: Under separate cover we are sending you some proofs as requested to do by Mr. Thomas Marbury, your brother. Please be good enough to destroy all that you do not wish us to finish, and send us, as soon as convenient, the one or more that you approve of. Thanking you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter, we are,

"Very respectfully yours,
"THE ROSETTI STUDIO."

This was satisfactory as far as it went—though she did think they might have written to a lady, instead of using that horrid typewriter. Tom was the next witness, and as usual, he proved picturesque and volcanic. He wrote:

"CHUM DEAR: Can't say just yet whether I can get down in time to celebrate with

you, but I'm playing to score. Anyway, I'll show up on Saturday at the latest. And now what do you think has happened? Lintott has suddenly turned up—came all the way from England to congratulate you on getting out of his clutches—and, say, he's not the worst ever by a long shot. I put him up at the club and have seen him a great deal in the past week, and I can just tell you one thing—Muzzy was dead right when she said—well, you know what she always said about him. The dear old boy can't speak of losing his Infant, without blowing his red nose and looking gone—so, Baby, if you should ever care to live in England, why, here's a chance. Seriously, old girl, the blooming Dragon seems to have a sneaking notion that you belong to him, and—now, if you give this away, there'll be something doing when I see you—he took me up to his room at the Lowlands Hotel, and I spotted a row of your photos on his bureau—the whole series, like the illustrations of a human document article in the magazines—honestly, every blessed picture you ever had taken, from one when you were two years old and wore chiefly a look of innocence, to the one taken this winter—you know, the one I liked so much, in your skating togs. I suspect Muzzy; what do you make out of it? Speaking of photos, I hope you received the proofs I ordered sent to you. I think they are great, especially the profile. Get busy now and pick out the ones you like best, and hustle them back to town so that they can be finished before he goes back 'ome, don't you know. It was awfully decent of him to leave it to you, and don't, for mercy's sake! forget to thank him. I must ring off now, as I have a date with Lintott—dinner and the theater—wish you were along. Till Saturday,
Tom."

For some moments she sat thinking, with pictures of the Dragon, as she had always imagined him, passing through her mind. Then she leaned her elbows on the edge of the table, and looked from one proof to another, and noted how perfectly the face of the man revealed the sort of chap that Tom, who was no emotional hero-worshiper, had so warmly praised. But, pshaw! the Dragon could not be what Tom said—it was too preposterous. She shut her eyes and tried to call up the image of the ogre, but, to her immense astonishment, it was gone! It had crumbled into dust, vanished into air, faded like the memory of dreams; and suddenly, strangely, almost overwhelmingly, this masterful, conquering man had come to—do what?

She began to laugh, a rather wobbly, jerky laugh, which quite illogically turned into crying and a chill. Suddenly she sat straight up. The whole thing flashed through her with the sting of a wound. Muzzy, Tom, everybody, had been conspiring against her. Oh, it was sickening, dreadful, awful! They had plotted to get her to like him, had they? Very well, they would see! They had sent him her photographs all these years, had they? They had lauded her in their letters to him, just as they had sung his praises for her benefit—that was their game, was it? *Very well!*

There was genuine satisfaction in this developing wrath against her flesh and blood, and a grim joy in mentally scowling at Muzzy and Tom, the traitor, for it relieved her of the increasingly ungracious duty of scowling at the proofs. It's not the easiest thing in the world to keep on scowling at a calm, strong, patient, gentle face, you know. And then, too, by arraigning them Mr. Lintott seemed to become a fellow-sufferer. Yes, he as well as herself, had been grievously sinned against, and this fact absolved the proofs, and made things generally more comfortable, for those plagued proofs were proving by this time at a tremendous rate—proving that she had never, never seen such a head to command, such gentle, winsome, compelling eyes; and that she had done him cruel wrong all her life!

For certain unaccountable reasons she had hesitated to open his letter, but now that he appeared as her partner in suffering, she tore the thin foreign envelope, and read:

"MY DEAR INFANT: A few hours after this reaches you, you will have escaped from the Dragon—you see, I know what you have called me all these years!—and I feel that in justice to myself I should write you a few words while still having the legal right to dragonize you. I can't quite realize yet how it will seem to have no Infant to worry about, but I beg you to believe that if in losing an infant I may gain a friend, I shall try my best to do so. I have come out to the States to meet you at the door of your free life—to say good-by, and how do you do, as well. I know you very well, you know, for your good mother sent me a recent

photo of you; and in order that I may not arrive a stranger, I am sending you some of mine. Your Brother Tom has been most kind, and offers to fetch me down to be present at the festivities on your Independence Day. God bless you, little girl!—I just *had* to say that once!—and pray do try to remember, sometimes, that while my legal care for you comes now to an end, my interest in you will never cease. You will slay the Dragon next Thursday with the stroke of a pen—will you not then, by way of atonement, you know, put in the Dragon's place for keeps,

"Your really true friend,
"ARTHUR LINTOTT?"

Margery laid the letter on the table, her mind swimming with conjectures and vague apprehensions quite beyond her power to understand. He begged for her friendship—Tom hinted at more, and Muzzy still more! And, oh, these proofs! How they pleaded as she looked down at them!

She stooped low over them, passing from one to the other slowly, almost reverently, while, in ways which far be it from us to try to comprehend, the man whose image they were was miraculously transfigured in her heart. Over the large profile proof she bended long, her eyes gradually filling with the least logical tears that ever proved nothing, and her whole soul struggling and denying, and hungering and wondering. Then, as if swept away by some new, irresistible rush of feeling—of sorrow for having misjudged, or of blind groping for what she could not say—she stooped quickly and laying her hot, flushed face on the fading proof, she kissed the Dragon!

"Lunch!" called up Kathy from downstairs. Kathleen *was* so prosaic!

"Now, Muzzy, dear," began Margery from the pile of cushions in the window seat in her mother's room, whither she had been mysteriously summoned, "unburden your mind freely, for you must remember, no matter what you have been doing, that your child will feel^o for you and forgive—so keep nothing back. Don't imagine for a moment that a child can be deceived. Something is on your mind—what is it?"

Mrs. Marbury's sense of humor left something to be desired, so she allowed

the Infant—an extreme impressionist—to conclude her remarks.

"Why, what on earth do you mean, Margery, dear?"

"Oh, you needn't beat about the bush," replied Margery, throwing her arms around her mother's neck, and rumpling her little side curls; "for you know that you and Tom have been plotting—yes, you have!—for ever so long, and now I propose to find out all about it."

"Really, my dear, I've not the remotest idea of what you mean," protested Muzzy, rearranging her side curls and calculating if Tom or Kathy had betrayed her.

"You old schemer!—but go on. What did you want to tell me, then?"

"I wish to say, that my real reason for objecting to your really too absurd idea of running off to New York this afternoon, is that Mr. Lintott is coming, and of course, I should——"

"What?" broke in Margery, springing to her feet and speaking fast and frigidly; "then I shall certainly go. Oh, how *could* you do it? It's just awful—it's cruel, mean, horrible—yes, don't stop me, mother—and I shan't put up with it!"

"I cannot permit you to go on in this way, Margery," stammered poor Muzzy, beginning to fear that perhaps they had gone a bit too far, after all; "and, my dear girl, the only reason that we did not tell you before, was that we wanted to give you a little surprise on your birthday."

"You've done it!" sniffed Margery, a great tragedienne; "but you've overdone it! You like him, and have just forced me to hate him, by the way you have dinned his praises into my ears all my life—but really, I did not dream that you actually intended to decoy him over here in order to trap him into lov——"

"Stop! Stop this instant!" cried Muzzy, trembling with sorrow and amazement; "not one more word of this, or I shall be compelled to think that you have lost all regard for your mother, who, God knows, has tried so hard to be a good and a——"

The Infant's hug choked off the end

of the sentence, and her lips were sealing those of the precious old schemer.

"But I insist on talking about him," cried Margery, when the violence of her affection had abated somewhat; "for I have seen his picture, and he's not a beast, and Tom says he's awfully nice, and I'm tickled to death that he's coming, and I must go to New York to-day—to get something decent to wear while he is here—so now tell me all about him! Begin. Is he light or dark, and how old is he, and is he really awfully clever, and wouldn't it be funny if he should fall in love with—Kathy?"

Muzzy sat and stared at the Infant. Could it be true? Had her prayers at last been answered? Yes, Margery actually was begging to be told about him! And she showed by her whole manner that she was in earnest. This was too much! Stretching out her arms toward her child, she drew her head down on her heart, and after a pathetic little effort to laugh, burst into the most delightful flood of glad tears.

"Do you mean it, my child?" she asked, when Margery had called her an old goosy for having thought all these years that she harbored anything but the loftiest regard for the Dragon.

"Of course I mean it," replied Margery, propping up Muzzy's feet on a stool, and cuddling herself into the cushions beside her for a heart-to-heart experience meeting; "so you must tell me everything. Wasn't it just lovely of him to come all the way from England just to see—us?"

"It was just like him—just like his father," answered Muzzy, glowing with unwonted rapture.

"Oh, did he have a father—that is, I mean, did you ever know his father? Now, Muzzy, darling, I'm going to lie here, and you are to tell me all about him, for Tom likes him ever so much, and—well—begin!"

"Of course, dear, you appreciate the fact, that what I am to say to you is not to be repeated—not even to Kathy."

"Oh, of course, Muzzy—he's my Dragon. Go on!"

"You have often wondered why a stranger and a foreigner left you your

snug little fortune, and why another stranger was appointed your guardian and trustee. I will tell you. Shortly before my marriage I spent some time in England and met Mr. Lintott's father, and he, not of course knowing of my engagement to poor papa, asked me to be his wife. He was a widower with an only child, a son—your Dragon."

"Lovely—go on!" said Margery, to cover Muzzy's weepy stop.

"Well, it seems that poor Mr. Lintott never forgot me—next to your father he was the noblest of men—and he settled a hundred thousand dollars on you."

"What was the matter with Kathy?"

"Don't interrupt. Mr. Lintott remembered you, because we named you after me—and, I have no doubt, because he knew that you came just after poor papa's death, and he feared that you might be poor some day. It was he who was the Dragon you used to hate so, for Arthur, of course, became your trustee only after his father's death."

"How old is he now?" asked Margery, trying to figure out a number of things.

"As nearly as I can calculate, Arthur must be thirty-three. He was, I confess, very young when they appointed him, but he has proved a father to you—and of late his interest in you has been most sincere and generous."

"Oh, has it?—go on!"

"Yes, and ever since you were eighteen—when I sent him your photograph—"

"Which, Muzzy precious?—he has them all."

"How do you know?" laughed Muzzy, beaming; "has Tom turned traitor? Well, darling, as I was saying, ever since you were eighteen Arthur has shown in many little ways that you were very much in his thoughts—quite apart, I mean, from his natural feeling of responsibility for your little estate."

"Now, Muzzy, that was very wicked of you—to scheme to palm me off on him in that way."

"Hush! If I felt that it would be a happy ending to his lifelong devotion to your welfare, to meet you and come to like you, you must never think that I

could have been so indelicate as to do anything to foster—"

"Have you ever seen him?" broke in Margery.

"Only once—when he was a mere baby. Why?"

"Because," replied the amazing Infant, pulling the proofs out of her bodice and spreading them on Muzzy's lap, "I thought you might help me to decide which of these is the best likeness. This is my favorite Dragon."

She put her finger on the proof which showed the man looking with steadfast, tender, mirthful, glorious eyes straight at you.

Muzzy, after her first surprise, looked long and sadly at the proofs, and then said quietly:

"No, he does not recall his father to my mind. I thought his father a handsome man, but this face is remarkable—magnificent."

The two worshipers sat silently studying the proofs.

"And may I go to New York?" suddenly inquired Margery.

"Certainly, dear, if you think you require any little things, for I want you to be perfectly happy on your birthday, and to—well, please him!"

A night off with Tom was a time of ecstasy to the Infant. To leave the drawn-work, the Farmington girl then in residence, Muzzy's practicality and Kathy's conscientiousness, and in a few hours find herself with an indulgent, easy, well-groomed man about town bent on giving her a good time, was indeed a joy.

The usual program—a smart dinner at the right place, a society play full of epigrams and stunning gowns, and a tight little supper in the palm room after—had been carried out; but evidently all was not well with the soul of the Infant. To be truthful, she was pouting, and the customary look of thrilled expectancy was wanting. Tom had, for once in his life, felt obliged to cross her; for the first time, he had shown the claws of "business" through the velvet glove of good-fellowship. Nor was the Infant the first woman to discover that her "verie parfitt gentyl knyghte" may

postpone a rendezvous or prove a bear under the stress of considerations affecting his bank account.

"Here's the supper, Puss"—he had ordered with a view to subjugating her by bribing her palate—"so, kiss and make up. It really couldn't be helped, you know, and, you'll see, it will turn out all right."

"I don't care," she replied, loftily, ignoring the movements of the waiter; "for you've just gone and spoiled everything."

Tom stood pat, while the waiter unfolded his plan of campaign. Margery had turned her back and was surveying the toilets of the women about her, when the waiter removed the silver cover from a dish, and her keen nostril detected rapture. If business could alter Tom, terrapin à la Maryland was not wholly devoid of influence on his sister. She wheeled about, and sent a slender foot on a mission of reconciliation under the table. It was successful, for the little pat that it administered on Tom's indicated that, through the good offices of the terrapin, the *entente cordiale* was now happily re-established.

"I still think you might have had him come at some other time. When will he arrive, and how long will he stay?" asked Margery, the first taste of the Madeira sauce having washed out all acerbity from her tone.

"I'm sorry, old girl, but I had to ask him, you know. You see, the way I'm fixed just now made it necessary. Maxwell, who is an awfully good fellow, is in a position to connect me with a mining scheme which will put me on easy street, and ever since he saw you with me at the opera that time, he has wanted to meet you. He came into the photographer's the other day while Lintott and I were there, and I asked him to join us all at home on your birthday. He was delighted, and I suggested that he send Muzzy or you his photo, so that you could all size him up."

"It hasn't come yet," replied Margery, blushing.

"No, of course not—not time for it yet; but it doesn't matter, for he'll go down to Stockbridge to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" exclaimed Margery; "why, my birthday is not until the day after. What on earth will we do with him for twenty-four hours, and you not there? You know what Kathy is."

"But Lintott will go down with him—and perhaps I myself. I wanted them both to have time to drive about a little. So, if I can't come, just send them off in the cart. They'll be happy."

The end of the little supper found the Infant in her wonted state of triple expansion joy, and Tom deposited her at Aunt Kate's door, a bit sleepy, but at peace with the universe.

After some hasty shopping in the morning Margery took the afternoon train. Once out of the tunnel, she took up her magazine, and thought, as she looked at the advertisements, that it was a pity the two men had taken the morning train, and wondering if Kathy would have the rector over to five o'clock tea, or entertain them by showing them her collection of shells, and her album of snapshots taken during her trip last summer. And dear old Muzzy would be sure to ask them if they were sure that their flannels were heavy enough—the spring months were so treacherous!

She turned her chair to make a casual survey of her fellow passengers, but whirled around again at once, on discovering a bore—a friend of Kathy's with a fixed idea—sitting a short distance from her. She was not aware that in the instant that she had faced the car—she sat in a very front seat by the little half sofa—a gentleman had caught sight of her and devoted the next three hours to a careful study of the back of her head. At Great Barrington this man walked forward and went into the smoking compartment, where he could not have so much as smoked a cigarette, for he came out immediately and stood in the narrow doorway looking frankly at the girl in the gray tailor-made gown in the first seat.

Becoming conscious that she was being stared at, Margery decided to challenge, and as she turned the next page she lifted her eyes at the rude stranger. It was the Dragon!

Hat in hand he stepped forward and

said in exactly the modulated English voice that she knew he would:

"I beg pardon, but surely this is Miss Marbury? I am indeed happy to meet you."

"Yes," answered Margery, eagerly—his manner had swept aside all need of embarrassment; "and I recognized you at once from the photograph, you know. Won't you sit down?"

She indicated the little sofa, and he sat down.

"Well, this is delightful, and such a surprise," he went on; "for I had no idea that you were in town. Tom said nothing about it when I saw him yesterday morning."

"No, for I only ran down for the night. But how is it that you did not take the morning train? Tom told me you would, so I telegraphed mamma to have some one meet you."

"Yes, I had intended to do so, but business prevented me at the last moment—fortunately as it now turns out. There is no need to ask how you are—nor to tell you how glad I am to meet you at last. What a fine country this about here."

"In summer, yes; but if you had to be snowed up here all winter, you would understand why I run up to town every time that my aunt sends me the invitation—and Tom the money."

"Ah, but after to-morrow, you know, you may do as you please about all that, for the Dragon can't cut you off with a beggarly allowance, can he?"

She thought that it was too sweet of him to speak in this way, and tried to formulate something to show him that she had never minded his interference the least bit; but nothing that was not mawkish or silly occurred to her.

"You would better get your traps together, for the next stop is ours," she said, as she rubbed the moisture from the window, and peered into the dusk.

"Unfortunately I cannot get off at Stockbridge now, for an old friend at Lenox insists on my spending the night with him, but I shall run down by the first train in the morning," said the Dragon, and Margery hoped that those

great, wondrous eyes of his did not detect her regret.

"Oh, that will be such a disappointment—to mamma," she said, adding at once with the eagerness of a sudden inspiration; "but I'll drive over to Lee in the morning and meet you—that is, of course, if the weather is fine—and we can drive by the Bowl, and so get the very best impression of Stockbridge—will you?"

Had he not wanted to do so, he could not have denied the look on the happy, eager face that was turned up at him; but he did very much wish to do so, and said:

"Capital! Awfully good of you. So, if it is fine, I'll get off at Lee—that was the name of the place, was it not?—and look for you. Here we are at Stockbridge. Let me help you with your parcels, and do please explain to your mother."

He carried out her numerous parcels to the platform where John and the wagonette were waiting, and she watched the Dragon as he stood bareheaded on the step of the departing train until the porter came to shut the vestibule doors. The proofs had not borne false witness. The Dragon was all that they had said.

From John she learned that no gentleman had arrived by the morning train—thank goodness! for now she need not have to entertain that Mr. Maxwell without Tom's help.

Arrived at "The Evergreens," it transpired that Tom had telegraphed that neither Mr. Maxwell nor the Dragon would come until to-morrow, and that he would bring them both with him on the morning train from town. The Infant chuckled at the thought of her secret knowledge of the time and manner of the Dragon's arrival via Lee, the cart, and herself for guide, and what dreams she had that night were happy.

Through the dimity curtains of her attic room Margery saw bright and early that the weather was all that it should be. Muzzy did not demur to her cautious hint about going off for a little drive—the rehabilitation of the true

Mr. Lintott, hero, had wrought a miracle of acquiescence in Muzzy; and Kathleen was always a negligible quantity when company was expected, for the airing of the spare room linen, and the baking of the little *paté* shells absorbed her whole mind. As three guests were to be met—so thought the ignorant—the wagonette would have to go to the station, leaving the cart free for the ulterior purposes of the wise. A benign conjunction of circumstances enabled the anxious Infant to slip out to the stable unobserved, and she was halfway to Lee before her presence was wanted and her absence learned. She drove up to the station platform just in time to see the Dragon alight from the train, and after stowing his countless bags and shawls, and the bundle of walking sticks—so English, thought Margery—they drove off among the hills on terms of the utmost cordiality and confidence. What they talked about during those two hours uphill and down will never be known, for he never permits any allusion to the subject, and she meets any hints in that direction with a silence which can be felt.

They reached Stockbridge soon after the train from New York had left the station—not accidentally at all, for from the neighboring hills Margery had kept an expert eye open for the smoke, as an untimely meeting of the cart and the wagonette would have been so embarrassing. Giving the latter time to drive out to the house, the cart finally turned into the village street which, even under the leafless, appealing branches of the elms, was the finest the Dragon had seen in America. And to make assurance doubly sure Margery stopped at the post office, thereby losing a few more minutes, and also getting a large envelope from the Rosetti Studio, containing, no doubt, that Mr. Maxwell's photo.

The coast was clear as they approached "The Evergreens," and Margery snuggled the Dragon into the library; and ran up to confess and to make proclamation of his coming. She heard Tom and Muzzy in august consultation behind closed doors, while

Kathy and Mr. Maxwell were nowhere to be found, so she ran up to her own room for that look at her hair which she had just ached to have for an hour. Her hair was soon restored to sanity, and she hastened down to liberate the imprisoned Dragon, and to introduce him in due form. On reaching the turn in the stairs she saw Kathy and a rather short, thick-set man standing by the great open fire in the hall—that Mr. Maxwell, of course.

"Well, here you are at last, Margaret. Where *have* you been all the morning. Let me present Mr. Lintott."

Margery heard what Kathy said, and she saw the gentleman turn and come forward eagerly to meet her with both of his hands held out to grasp hers. She thinks that she must have stammered out some sort of a welcome; but what he said, or what else occurred, or what Kathy and he must have thought—everything was a blank. Pleading some mad excuse, she staggered upstairs, with amazement, chagrin, shame, swimming through her dizzy head.

At the top of the stairs Tom met her and gave her, in spite of her hysterical tears which he, of course, misinterpreted, twenty-one resounding kisses, and held her when she tried to run away.

"So you would run away, would you?" he asked; "and weren't here, you naughty Infant, to welcome the Dragon. Maxwell wired me that he would come down from Lenox this morning, but John reports that he did not arrive, so after all, you can have the Dragon and me alone."

She broke away from him, and fled, Tom abandoning the pursuit on hearing her lock her door. Flinging herself on the bed she gave herself over to utter and final woe.

Who was the man, then, who was waiting for her at this very horrible, sickening minute down in the library—over whose photograph she had raved—and—oh, it was too awful—with whom she had been driving all over the country and telling of her past, her hopes, her inmost self? Who was he—this irresistible man with his gentle, mighty, conquering way? Maxwell, of

course! Well, she would *never* go downstairs, that was all! Let them find her body up here in her room! They would be sure to discover him in the library—he couldn't stay there always—and explanations would follow, and then death would be preferable to hearing Tom guy her in public, and Kathy sermonize her in private. She had secretly plotted to drive this man, and had driven for two mortal, shameful hours—two hours of such happiness, too, as she had never known before!—and now he would learn that she had taken him for Mr. Lintott, and she would have to treat him not as she had done in the cart, but as a casual acquaintance of Tom's! This was terrible—unspeakable. As her mind recalled their long talk she felt that he had not said a word that could lead her to suspect that he was aware of her mistake, and was playing with her. No! He had spoken of the Dragon in the third person, and she now recollected that he always tried to turn the conversation away from themselves to the scenery, to books, to travel. With her face buried in the pillows and her body rocking from side to side, she tried to make out how the horrible mistake had been made, and suddenly remembered the letter which she had got at the post office. She tore it open madly, and read:

"MADAM: Since writing you the other day we have discovered that we made an embarrassing mistake which we hope has not caused you serious inconvenience. Your brother, Mr. Marbury, kindly brought a gentleman here at the very time that another friend of his, Mr. Herbert Maxwell, was sitting. After Mr. Lintott had allowed us to make several negatives of himself we were requested to forward them to you for selection; and then Mr. Maxwell also asked us to send you one of his photographs when finished. As we had not met either of the gentlemen before, we became confused after they had gone, and so sent you the proofs of Mr. Maxwell's photographs instead of Mr. Lintott's. Craving your pardon for this blunder,

"We remain, very respectfully yours,
"THE ROSETTI STUDIO."

Smelling salts and a sense of humor are of incalculable value in a crisis. The Infant ran downstairs a wholly different

being from the dashed and hopeless wretch who had run upstairs only a short time before. She found them still in the hall, convulsed by a story that the Dragon—the real Dragon, of course—had just told.

With such ease and winning naturalness that she could not resist, Mr. Lintott made room for her on the top of the big carved settle on which he had perched himself, and when he put his hand on her shoulder and said: "So this is my Infant, eh? What flatterers those photographs were, to be sure," she laughed as heartily as the rest.

"And now give an account of yourself," went on the Dragon, with his blue eyes twinkling, and giving her ear a tweak, "from the time of your birth up to and including this morning—especially this morning, you know, when you deliberately ran away from me."

"Yes, and it's well I did so," retorted Margery, moving mysteriously toward the library, through whose half-opened door she had caught sight of Mr. Maxwell's signals of distress; "for otherwise Mr. Maxwell would have had a cold welcome."

They followed her with their eyes, and great was the jubilation when she triumphantly produced Maxwell, and introduced that perplexed but polite gentleman, with a highly impressionist explanation involving sundry departures from what the unimaginative realist might call the truth.

The memorable two days passed, and finally Tom and Mr. Maxwell returned to town, leaving the Dragon, who was by this time more at home than any of them. Strange days indeed, had these been, and marked by psychological and emotional reconstructions and upheavals new to the Infant. With the inexorable-ness of fate her whole being leaped forth to meet the Dragon, whose irrepressible, not to say impish, love of mischief, and genial, generous, whole-souled philosophy of life appealed compellingly to her. He was sane, bursting with common sense, bubbling with wit and whimsicality, wholesomely worldly, yet withal chivalrous, clean, unselfish.

But over against him was Maxwell;

a poet, a man of letters, gentle, reserved, his native sense of wit neutralized or cramped by sternness and conscientiousness—and yet, as those fatal proofs up in her room could show, it was he, and not the Dragon, who had won to the citadel of Margery's wondering, hungry idealism.

Mr. Maxwell was gone, however—gone, moreover, without having shown the remotest interest in her or her idealism, gone without having once sought or accepted an opportunity to be alone with her for even a moment.

The week grew into two, and still the Dragon stayed on. Muzzy must have forgotten all about the proofs, for she never commented upon the difference between the samples and the goods as delivered in the person of the Dragon. Mr. Lintott was Mr. Lintott, and by every sign in the rather limited sky of Muzzy's imagination, Margery was to become Mrs. Lintott.

Meanwhile Kathy was like a star and dwelt apart. The Infant feared that she and the Dragon were now made the subject of Kathy's prayers, for several of his views of things in general had met with her disapproval; but from the first the Dragon had treated Kathy with the easy indifference of a brother, which she reciprocated, by suddenly packing up her prayer-book, her conscience and her clothes, and going off for a month's visit to Aunt Kate.

This threw the whole burden of enjoining the Dragon upon Margery, a task she would have undertaken with the utmost eagerness but for those fatal proofs which nightly reposed under her pillow, and every morning reminded her of the strongest, sweetest face that ever was.

"And now, little woman," said the Dragon, on the night before he was to have gone away, "I'm going home to-morrow—won't you come with me?"

"To-morrow?" cried Margery, referring to his first statement only.

"Oh, I don't mind you taking a few days to get ready, you know," laughed Mr. Lintott, as he put a strong hand on each of her shoulders and, holding her so, told her in a few simple, terribly

earnest words, that he loved her—had always loved her, and that he lived only to care for her, to protect her, to make her happy.

Time after time Margery tried to escape from him or to stop him; but he held her fast until she stammered something equally indefinite and misleading, in which he thought he caught the decisive word "another."

"Another?" he said, relaxing his hold upon her, the saddest look that Margery had ever seen filling his eyes; "then with all my heart, Margery, I beg your pardon, and God bless you—only—I have —"

She had never seen a man's tears before, and they were more than she could bear. Choking and miserable, and in the dark, she fled up to her room, once more to let her little white bed find the way out for her. She escaped dinner by pleading, truthfully enough, a splitting headache, and to this day she suspects that Muzzy told him that there was no "other" at all of whom his chivalry need take account.

At all events, when Muzzy came up at ten o'clock to tuck her in as usual, the Infant whispered, "I can *prove* that there is another"—and Muzzy did not show the surprise or ignorance of the allusion, which a woman with an easy conscience must have done. In the stillness of the night Margery fought it all out, and before morning she had declared for the Dragon in spite of the proofs—the proofs which were under her pillow! As soon as it was light she gave "that Mr. Maxwell" one more chance, by taking the proofs to the window. *They had faded out completely!* The Dragon had won! Tearing the discolored proofs into pieces, Mr. Maxwell ceased from troubling, and her feelings were at rest.

When the breakfast bell called her below she found Muzzy and the poor Dragon sitting suspiciously close together in the hall, but Muzzy's evident nervousness and excitement, the Infant saw in a moment, were the result of some unknown cause not connected with herself or the Dragon.

"What do you think, my dear?"

asked Muzzy, the moment Margery had kissed her good-morning; "but, there, you could never guess it."

"Dear me!" replied Margery, laughing; "I thought I had the news of the day in store for you all, but now somebody has got ahead of me. Tom's not going to get married, is he?"

"Not he," answered dear old Muzzy, fidgeting about, her side curls tremulous with suppressed excitement; "not Tom, my dear, not Tom, but—Kathy!"

Margery pretended to faint, carefully arranging to fall toward the Dragon. Her recovery was rapid, however, and she hugged Muzzy and shook hands with the Dragon, and tried to speak, but could only scream with laughter baptized with tears.

"Kathy?" she shrieked at last; "to whom—to whom? Oh, my side!"

"Do be quiet, my dear," protested Muzzy; "and don't be foolish. Kathleen

writes that she wants my consent to her engagement to Mr. Maxwell—an excellent man, don't you think?"

Again the Infant collapsed into the Dragon's arms.

"But what is the news you say you have?" asked Muzzy.

"Oh, that's so—I was forgetting. Of course, it's nothing like so important as this about old Kathy, but it may interest you. You see, Muzzy precious, I'm going to marry the Dragon."

"It's the first I've heard of it, then," said Lintott, as he drew her head down upon his heart; "and in fact, only last night I heard the rumor denied—on very high authority."

All through breakfast that morning dear old, foolish, sentimental Muzzy kept shedding quite the most inappropriate tears, and all day long she relived days and years that had been buried in her heart for a generation.



A ROBIN IN THE RAIN

THE springtime rains have beaten on the trees
And taken fragrant tribute from them all;
Crushed apple blossoms lie upon the wall,
Forsaken by the faithless honey bees.
The saddest of the vernal days are these—
With every passing wind wet petals fall,
The birds forget their tender mating call
And sing no more their joyous melodies.

Nay, listen! Like the voice of silvered flute,
In brave, sweet cadence ever rippling on,
A hidden robin pipes his cheery strain!
Ah, Love! Thy lips and mine are sadly mute
When for the moment sun and hope are gone—
We have not faith to sing amid the rain!

MYRTLE REED.

Counselor MacCarty's First Scalp

By Seumas Mac Manus

Author of "Donegal Fairy Stories," "A Lad of the O'Friels," Etc.

"MY first scalp," said the counselor, "was the scalp of Solomon Greer. No, no, I haven't forgotten it, nor am I likely to forget. 'Twas over it that I made sudden name and fame. And ye'll hear how, if you have patience.

It is a far cry now to the day I was first called counselor, and there's many a head gone gray since, and many a thing I have forgotten; but the big success that first made a man of me, and the comical way that I came by it, isn't likely to slip my memory till my memory slips me.

Yes, it's going to tell it I am, if you only give an old man time to draw his breath and take his drink. In troth, and I say who know, when you young fellows have come through half the wars and scars that I have come through in my day, you will find a deal of the sprightliness dusted out of your jackets, and you will be wondering in what century it was that your youth left ye.

But here's to you, anyhow, and may the sprightliness and light-heartedness be with you, boys, for many a long day to come, for it isn't Counselor MacCarty would be the man to discourage you.

And, boys, I'll not try to tell you what year it was that I was called to the bar, for fear that I would overreach my memory, which is getting too delicate to play pranks with; but, for three years after the date I don't mention, my experience was much the same as your own—hanging around the courts like a seedy bailiff in want of a job, and yawning every day bigger and

wider, till Larry Maguire at length shoved half a pound of biscuits into my mouth, saying, "I know what you're wantin', boy." And, in faith, to be candid with you, boys, he wasn't far astray, for there was days when I ate my breakfast at supper time, and trusted to God that I might get a meal, under any name, whatsoever, on the morrow.

In them days, my parents—no shame to them!—weren't rolling in wealth, so I had to support myself—which was as difficult as the devil—them times, in five-and-fifty ways, that would make you blush for your profession if I told you how. But I'll spare you your blushes, seeing that it is very few of them you have got to waste.

Howsomever, I was starving at the bar, as I said, for three years before I got a chance to showing the stuff was in me. I had always my share of gall, and I used to say that when the day and the chance come, I would astonish Larry Maguire, and the rest of them who had now laughed at me for so long. And astonish them I assure you I did, on one case—a trespass case that had come up from the country—which God and good fortune sent my way by giving Gallinagh, who was my senior on it, stomach cramps just at the right minute, and giving me control of the case and a free hand in it, carrying it through to success in a manner that drew me some handsome compliments from the bench, and sent me up at a gallop in the estimation of them for whom I stood as a good-natured butt, heretofore. And right heartily they congratulated me on the splendid beginning I had made, while, to show their

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sincerity, they insisted on my spending three-quarters of my fee on a champagne supper for them. And when they had swallowed the last of my fee, Larry Maguire he clapped me on the back, and he said:

"Now, my lad, that we've seen you on the road to fortune, you have got to look out for yourself henceforth. If you succeed—as every one of us trusts in his heart you may—we will always, every man of us, be proud to think it was us made ye, and be at your service whenever you have a ten-pound note for to spend—which, pray God, may be often—but, if you fail, then the devil help ye, for his children won't. Good-night," says he, "an' good luck. Come along, boys."

I thanked God that I had made a good beginning and proved the faith that was in me. But, after all, it's small the fame that's to be made out of a tuppence ha'penny trespass case, and I wished with all the veins of my heart that some wind would soon blow me a decent case, wherein a man might get leave to wind his elbows.

Somehow or other—Larry Maguire said after that it was because I troubled God little—my prayer soon seemed as if it was heard, for, in less than three week's time after, my landlady of a morning handed me a long letter that there fell a decent-sized check from when I opened it, and which contained, likewise, a brief and a request from Attorney John Rea, of Belfast, for my services as junior counsel in no less a case than that of "The Queen against M'Gaw and Costelloe."

I assure you, boys, it took my breath away, for this was the famous agrarian case in the fifties that fixed the attention of England, as well as Ireland, and took on no less importance than that of a State trial. Rea, it seems, had been in the court the day I won my trespass case, and he was so pleased with the fine fight I made that he would have me as junior counsel and no other, and bullied and threatened them that were for employing a better-known man until he bullied them into agreeing with him.

For nine days after the receipt of that document I was in the height of good spirits, you may swear, and I felt that my name was now as good as made, and I had only to sit down and wait for fortune to trot along after. I was in fine feather them days, surely. But, if I was delighted at the prospect of being junior counsel on such a famous case, delight was no name for it when, some days later, Larry Maguire took me aside in the court, and whispered to me that he hoped in his heart I was making a good study of my case, and preparing a capital defense; "for," says he, under his breath—"an' this is a dead secret that can't go no further—as I foresee things now, it's nine chances out of ten that the case will come on on one or other day of the Carrowmore races!"

I gave him a puzzled look upon this, and he added:

"Dundonald"—Dundonald was my senior—"hasn't missed the Carrowmore races once in the last five-and-twenty years. As you know, they are his very own races, so to speak. He has always a couple of horses running in them; he has entered three horses for them this time—two for the first day, and one for the second, and he has backed the animals with a small fortune. You know Dundonald; you know the sport he is, and you know—what all the world and half of the moon knows—that all the cases in the kingdom wouldn't keep him back from a day's sport that he had his mind set upon—and not from the Carrowmore races, over and above all else. For your own sake," says he, "you had better put your foot on that, and don't whisper it even to your bedpost; for there's more than half a chance that Dundonald, in his usual unconscious way, will walk off with himself at the last minute, without as much as 'the devil take care of ye till I come back,' and leave the case maybe entirely in your hands."

When I tell you, boys, that I didn't sleep for three nights after that bit of intelligence, I'm only telling what's the bare downright truth; but if I didn't sleep I didn't lose much by it, for I studied my case day and night, going

through it like a worm, and making myself master of it in every detail. And I likewise begun preparing a speech for the defense—a speech that I was determined should take the wind out of the sails of all the orators that had the misfortune to go before me.

And to living mortal I breathed no word of what Larry Maguire had told to me—not even when, at last, the hearing of the case *was* fixed for the first day of the Carrowmore races—and I felt like to burst with the strain of containing too much. Even between Larry Maguire and myself, a wise wink was all the intelligence that passed and, betwixt joy and trepidation, tempered with hard work, I passed my time from then till the day that might be big with my fate. I was only afeerd that if, after all my castle-building, and after all the beautiful defense and magnificent oration I had prepared, anything should unluckily happen to Dundonald to hold him from the races, and keep him in court, I would never recover from the blow again.

On the great morning I went to court with my heart in my mouth, and as I hurried through the hall I got a slap on the back that surely sent the heart out of me, I thought, past all recalling. It was that divil, Larry Maguire, who had given me the outrageous bang, and, says he, when I turned in astonishment: "The Lord has been on your side, after all; Dundonald has gone to Carrowmore and the news is only taking wing yet."

"Thank God," I said heartily, as soon as I got my breath back, and Larry Maguire looked as delighted as myself. For, notwithstanding that he had his wee failing—like many's a good man before and since—of looking upon the wine when it was several colors of the rainbow, and notwithstanding, too, that there was no rascality in the way of a joke that he wouldn't perpetrate on his closest and dearest friend, there was ne'er a bad bone nor a mean drop in all the body of him, and he was the best-hearted vagabond that ever wore a wig, and would go through fire and water to serve anyone he had a *gradh* for.

Says he to me:

"I'm going out, myself, to have a drink on the strength of your good fortune; you go ahead," says he, "and prepare for your case."

I went on; but, whether it was on my heels or my head I went—I couldn't tell you if I was on my book oath.

"MacCarty," says I to myself, "if you don't die of heart disease you'll be a made man this day, or you'll know the *raison why*."

A quarter of an hour was about as much as I enjoyed this paradise, for at the end of that time the black news came to me that old Solomon Greer—Sour Solomon, as the boys nicknamed him—was, at the last minute, given charge of the case as senior counsel, and this, too, though John Rea, who was the cutest and most far-seeing attorney in Ireland, fought tooth and nail against the proposal, and would, whether or no, have me myself to conduct the case; for his faith in me was big.

Now there wasn't a better-hated man at the bar than Solomon Greer, or one who was more justly hated. His biggest enemy couldn't deny his real cleverness—if you screenged the courts of the three countries with a herring net you could catch none cleverer—but his nearest and dearest friend couldn't deny that he was a most despicable divil. He begrudged to see anybody but himself successful in anything, and he was more particularly spited at any youngster at the bar getting a footing. There wasn't a minute in the day that you couldn't hang a pot on the sneer on his upper lip, and he hadn't a brother at the bar that he didn't, some time or other, say or do a mean thing to, so that he well won the distinction of being the most detested man that ever stood up in court.

He was as bumptious and as conceited as if his head had been innocent of brains—which, as I hinted, and as I am guessing yous all know well, was very far from being the case, for it was him—this same Solomon Greer—who, on account of the extraordinarily clever way in which he pulled through with a State prosecution, was asked by a delighted lord-lieutenant to name any rea-

sonable request he liked, that would ever after be a standing memento of his victory, and who, like the ignorant, vain fellow he was, asked that he should be allowed to practice in coort without wig or gown. He got his request granted as soon as asked, and from that time forward he was proud to make himself conspicuous by never wearing either the one or the other. He would come striding into the coort of a morning, and over to the corner seat that he had made his by right of user. There he would throw himself down, cross his legs and his arms, and with the back of his head resting on the rail behind him, close his eyes in a bored sort of fashion, and, until the minute that he was needed to jump up, never move or stir a muscle—barring that, at a time when some counselor said something that didn't please his mightiness, a grunt, for all the world like a pig's, would come out of him.

On the next instant he would appear to be asleep or dead again.

Well, boys, when I got the bad news that Sour Solomon was given the case, I was in the dumps badly, and—for I am not afraid to confess it to yous now—dropped more tears than two; a minute later I got another bang on the back that made me roar, and I found Maguire behind me, wanting to know what the dickens was the matter.

Says I, "Thèy have put Solomon in the case!"

Maguire was the most confounded man that ever I beheld, and "may the divil break his bones," says he—for poor Larry was never choice in his language—as soon as he found words. And then he didn't move or speak for five minutes. At the end of that time Maguire made a sound with his mouth which always was a sign that he had untied a tough knot. He gripped me by the shoulder, and he shook me, and he says:

"Rouse yourself up, MacCarty, an' tell me if you have your notes, and your speech, and all ready."

"All," says I, "all," dolefully shaking my head.

"I'm glad you have," says he, "because you'll have need for them."

"What do you mean?" says I.

"No matter," says he, "buck yourself, and shake yourself together, and prepare for your business. There isn't a man," says he, "at this bar, that doesn't owe a grudge, and a long one, to Solomon, and, by my davy, I mean to get square with the curmudgeon this day, and if," says he, "I can likewise help a friend in distress"—meaning me—"by means of the same wiper, I'll carry away from the coort a lighter conscience than I fetched to it. Do as you're bid," says he, "and ask no questions, and go into this case with the notion that Greer is on the other side of kingdom come, instead of at your elbow. You'll see what you'll see," says he, "if you're prepared to obey orders."

With the courage of despair I got up, and, says I, "I'm prepared for anything short of shooting the judge."

"Good man," says Maguire, says he, and he slapped me on the back. "I like spunk."

I took my bag and my papers, and wondering what on earth project was in the wind with Maguire, went to my seat in coort, for it was now the time when the judge would be going on the bench at any minute.

Now, as I heard afterwards, the delight of Greer at getting this case was doubled by his learning the fact that I—a presumptuous junior rat, as he would name it—had been prepared to run it. I thought myself that I had seen a venomous smile on his face, as well as the sneer, when himself and his bag came into the coort this morning. And he said, as he laid down his bag with a bang at my side:

"Youngster, why didn't you go to the races this morning?"

And there was a taunt in his tone like a knife point. But I made the fellow no reply. He threw himself down, as usual, in his usual seat, and only got up again to remark, superciliously, that he was for the defense, when the case was called. After that he subsided again, and gave no other sign of life than the usual grunt till the coort rose at lunch time. And then the case for the defense,

though not quite concluded, wasn't far off it.

All the time myself had been in a mighty state of trepidation, conjecturing what might or might not be going to happen—or if anything at all was going to happen. But all the time I didn't let my trepidation interfere with the study of the case as it went along. When I came back from lunch in a greater state of trepidation and wonderment still, Solomon had been back before me, and was again ensconced in his seat in his usual position, and I noticed, too, that Larry Maguire had taken the seat right behind him, and one of the boys said:

"Maguire isn't well the day, whatever the matter can be; he went out for lunch, but he came back without eating it, and he was here in the court awaiting us."

I whistled to myself, and I said—to myself, likewise—"Larry, you're a puzzle for the devil himself."

No matter. I shook myself, and attended to the continuation of the evidence for the Crown as closely as if my own fate, and the fate of half the world, was hanging on it. And the minute it was finished people said:

"Now the play is about to begin!" and all the court took a long breath, preparing to see Greer tear the witness—there was just one chief witness, Sergt. Kinsella, on whom the whole case depended, but whose evidence was clear and convincing—tear him limb from limb. Greer unfolded his arms and legs as if about to rise. But, the next moment, the whole eyes of the whole court were fixed on him, by the strange, out-of-the-ordinary sort of look that suddenly overspread his ugly countenance. He was still reclining, and the grin on his upturned face puzzled all that gazed at him. For one whole moment Greer remained in this queer position, without any more sound and with no further motion than the grin, which was gradually growing wider and more hideous looking.

His lordship, himself, on the bench, bent over to know what was the matter with him, or was he going to begin his

cross-examination, and, as he did so, he seen him folding his arms, and crossing his legs again, and airily enough, waving his hand to me to attend to this part of the business.

For myself, I had had my hand on a water jug, going to empty its contents over him—for I thought the poor devil was taken weak—but when I seen him cross his arms and legs again, I was reassured, and when he give me the signal to rise, I said to myself he thought the cross-examination of Kinsella beneath him, and too small a matter for him to attend to.

All the court was relieved, too, but they were badly disappointed likewise—I could see that, because they had looked for great things from Greer's cross-examination.

But, upon my soul, boys, though it's myself who says it, I can assure you that I very soon put the whole court in good humor with itself by the way I handled and hackled my man. I first courted and wheedled him until I got him to walk into my trap, never squeakin' myself till I was able to show him and the jury, that he had contradicted his evidence half a dozen times if he had done so once. And, when I had him heartily out of humor with himself, I badgered him till I had him as narvous as a cat, and then bullied him till he was as limp as a drowned rat. And after that I swept the ceiling, and the walls, and the floor with him, and turned him down, dissected like a doctor's subject.

And there was more than half a sensation in the court when I sat down, I tell ye.

I hadn't time to look at or bother about Greer during all this; but now there was a wait for him, and another breathless pause, and I turned round to look; and there, behold ye! was the old curmudgeon in the very self-same position still, with a good bit of a grin going and coming on his countenance, but no sign whatsoever of his getting to his feet to open the case for the defense!

From the box the jury all turned their eyes upon him. All the counselors in the bar faced round by him, and the judge on the bench leaned over to see

why he wasn't rising, and all of the crowd in the well-packed coorthouse stood on their tiptoes, one trying to see over another's head, to find if Greer wasn't going to get to his feet, or why he wasn't going to do so!

There was about a minute's wait, during which time you might have heard a cockroach cough; and all this time the very peculiar grin, that I mentioned before, was again growing wider and greater on the face of Greer; but the eyes of him were closed, or nearly so. I wondered, whether, after all, it wasn't my downright duty to take the water jug, and empty it over him at all cost, but I restrained myself. At the same time the heart in me was thrashing at my ribs, wondering what was going to come next, or would I, after all, have to open for the defense, too? But then the idea of such extraordinary good luck was too good to be true, I said to myself, and my heart banged away till I thought it would damage my breastbone.

It must have seemed to me a long time—though I believe it was only a minute—till, while still all the court was on tiptoe, and every sowl of them holding his breath, the grin on Greer's face got more hideous, and then, to my overpowering joy, unfolding an arm he waved me to proceed.

He folded his arms again; the grin died out of his face, and the court lay back and listened as I opened for the defense, in a speech that—Larry Maguire assured me after—was a triumph of genius, and which, be it what it might, held the court spellbound, anyhow. Next I proceeded to call up witnesses, and, one by one, put them through their paces. From time to time I took a look at poor Greer, and there he lay as still and motionless as the side of a church—barring that wonderful grin, which flabbergasted me to account for, was still coming and going on his countenance. The other counselors, too, looked at him from time to time, and even his lordship now and again took a stolen squint at him from over the bench. And every time they looked at him they shook their heads

and whispered to their neighbor. "What's over Greer?" was the uppermost thought in their minds and the words on the tips of the tongues of all. And only I knew, myself—what all the world knew—that Greer would no more look at liquor than he would hang himself, I would have thought—what it's likely many's a man there must, after all, have thought—that he was incapable drunk, but with his wits well enough about him to save his skin by remaining quiet.

"After all," says I to myself, "this is a strange world, and there's no knowing what the devil will tempt a man to."

For myself, every step in the case was a step higher; and, if my opening speech was a good one, and a success, my closing one was—to put it in Larry Maguire's words, as afterwards used—"a wonderful, rhetorical display, worthy of being recorded among the brightest efforts in the annals of legal oratory."

These were the words of a too enthusiastic friend, of course, and must be discounted; but, as I say again, although I say it myself, my concluding speech was an oration so remarkable that it nearly surprised myself, as much as it surprised the crowd in the court, the judge on the bench, and, still more important, the twelve gentlemen in the jury box.

The grin on Greer's face—for I glanced at him from time to time—as I proceeded with my oration, was something appalling, boys; but, I am told by them that seen it, whenever I made a good and bright point, the same grin took on a malicious appearance, and it looked as if some one was sticking corker pins into him. And when, at last, in an eloquent peroration that lifted, so to speak, the crowd off their feet, and nearly raised the roof off the coorthouse with the burst of cheering which it brought forth, I concluded my speech and sat down, with that sort of joy in my heart that I expect to experience again some near day, when I take my seat in Heaven—Greer, I am told, got white and black by turns, but I know myself that after I sat down, and

gave a glance at him, he was like a bedsheet in the face. The grin was gone away, but it seemed to me there was venom enough, between the set lips of him, to poison a parish!

I need only say that the case for the Crown was riddled so that its own father didn't know it. Kernaghan—who was then the attorney-general—tried, in his windup speech, to make the most he could by piecing the tatters together, but he found it pitiable, and left it little better. The judge, in his charge to the jury, complimented myself, till, if you will believe me, I blushed all the way to the back of my head. He directed them, moreover, to return a verdict for the defendants—which they did, after a retirement of barely four minutes.

And then the roar that come out of the throats of the thousand people who packed the court told me that the name and fame, and the fortune, of young Counselor MacCarty, was from that moment made. In my heart, boys, I do assure you, I gave thanks to God. There wasn't a counselor at the bar that didn't rush over to me to wring my hand, and there wasn't one of them as he done so but gave a puzzled look at Greer, who was still in the very selfsame position, and with the selfsame grin fixed on his face. Larry Maguire—by the way—was the first man who had hold of my hand, and, with both of his, was working it like a pump handle; on his face as he did so was a most mystifying look, and he gave a wink and a jerk of his thumb over his shoulder towards where Greer sat, before he jumped away, and out of court, like a man who was filled for bursting with something that he must get rid of or perish.

When I got through with my congratulations, as I called them, I thought

it was surely time to attend to Greer, and I asked him:

"Mr. Greer," I said, "there is surely something the matter with you? Can't I get you something will relieve you?"

He closed his lips tight, and then he opened them again a wee bit.

"Ye — can — get — me — a — pair — of scissors," he jerked out.

I looked at him dumfounded for a moment, and then he hissed:

"The — devil — take — you — for — a — blockhead! Can't—you—understand — English?"

Instantly I sprang for the clerk's desk, where I knew there were scissors, and I had them back to him in a moment, saying:

"Here they are, Mr. Greer," and waited to prevent him cutting his throat, if that was what he intended.

He said:

"D——n you; shear away that hair at the back of my head, and let me out of hell."

Then the riddle was read! A penn'-orth of cobbler's wax on the rail back of his head had cooked his goose for poor Greer!

On that same evening I was wringing Larry Maguire's hands, and near almost shedding tears on them, and I was saying:

"Maguire, can I ever repay you, and how?"

"Ye can, sir," says Larry, coolly, "with tu'pence ha'penny, the cost of the cobbler's wax—and a dirt cheap price it is for making a man of you."

He was right, and, though that is two-score years and more ago now, I never again got such a tu'pence ha'penny worth—maybe never again needed it.

And that, boys, was my first scalp. Pass the bottle, McGurk.



THE BRIDE

By Dorothy Dix

A WOMAN never stands so completely at the parting of the ways as when she is a bride.

It is then that she decides her fate, and on her tact, her common sense, her generalship depends the happiness or misery of her future and her husband's, and I, for one, never see one starting out without wanting to load her down with compasses and maps and charts to steer by.

In the first place, I suppose you realize what you did in getting married? Matrimony means, among other things, a few parties to which you drag a tired and unwilling man, instead of being joyfully escorted to innumerable balls. It means no more beaux; occasional theatre tickets; buying your own candy and flowers; few compliments; a peck on the cheek for a kiss, and that, instead of daily rehearsals of undying devotion, you will be expected to take your husband's love on trust.

But you will have lots of husband, and sometimes he is worth paying this price for. If, however, you are not prepared to exchange a sweetheart for a husband, imitate the example of the Frenchman, who refused to marry the woman he loved, because if he did he would have no agreeable place to visit.

In the next place, I would bid you take a death grip on your courage. You will never have greater need of it than now. The most bitter piece of sarcasm that has ever been perpetrated is calling the first few months of married life the honeymoon. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred it is a period of tears, and friction, and disillusioning, when a man finds out that he has married a woman with a temper instead of an angel, and

the woman discovers that the hero of her romantic dreams eats onions, and can get into a towering rage, and say things if dinner is ten minutes late. If a "glory ticket," as our colored friends call a marriage license, had a return trip coupon, and there was a halfway house located anywhere in the first three months of the journey, many a couple would never reach the wooden wedding station at all. Before the new wore off of their silver-plated wedding presents, they would be making a bee line back to freedom.

Nor is there anything strange in this. There is no other such example in the world of the persistence with which hope rises superior to experience, as that which leads every one of us to believe that two people brought up in different environments, with different tastes and habits, and ways of thinking and believing about religion, and politics, and women's clubs and cooking, can ever adjust themselves to each other without collisions in which somebody is mighty liable to get hurt. Later on we learn to regard a difference of opinion with philosophy, but in the honeymoon it is a tragedy, and the possibility of such a thing comes as a terrible shock to both parties. To the woman, because she has been flattered, and petted, and the knowledge that the adoring lover can turn into a critical husband is like a douche of ice water. To the husband, because every man gets the jar of his life, when he finds out that his wife isn't going to be merely the echo of himself, but is a creature with opinions, and views, who is just as much set in her ways as he is in his.

Don't get discouraged, little bride, be-

cause you have found out that married life is a field where each of us must hoe his own row, instead of a garden of delight, in which to dream away the idle hours. Don't conclude, either, because you have discovered that your idol has feet of clay, that he isn't worth worshipping. There's a lot of pure gold mixed up with the baser material. Make the most of that.

After all, a good, honest, loving man, who is willing to work to support you is worth a dozen hot-air poets, or impossible heroes of romance, who would make fine speeches while you do the cooking. Reflect, also, that your husband is probably just as much disappointed in you as you are in him, and that you are shattering just as many of his ideals as he is smashing dreams of yours. This is a nasty pill to swallow, but it is guaranteed to cure.

Try to use some common sense. Try to realize that marriage means partnership, and that your part of the bargain is to make a comfortable home. If you fail to do that you default on your contract, and you are the worst sort of a swindler. If you have had the misfortune to have had a mother, who, through lack of sense or mistaken tenderness, has taught you nothing of the domestic affairs a woman ought to know, for pity's sake have enough strength of character to go to work and remedy the mistake that has been made in your education. Any woman not a fool can learn to cook, and keep accounts, and manage a house, and if she's the right sort of a wife she will do it. The man who loafs around a corner grocery and drinks and smokes while his wife takes in washing to support him, is not a whit lazier or less account, or more to be blamed, than the woman who spends her days lying on a couch reading novels, while her servants idle, and steal, and waste, and get up any kind of mess for a tired and hungry man to eat after he comes home from a hard day's work. Women always seem to think that knowing how to keep house comes by inspiration, and if they don't happen to be born with it, they are no more to be blamed than for not having

golden hair and blue eyes. It is such nonsense. It's a question of industry and good sense, and something any woman can do if she wants to.

Then, for goodness' sake, let a man down easily on the love-making business. Men carry sentiment only as a ballast to the rest of the other cargo of life. Women are loaded down to the guards with it. Every girl expects the man she marries to keep up the high-pressure love-making of courting days. Of course, he doesn't do it. One doesn't keep chasing the thing one has caught, but women can't understand this, and when a man no longer feels it necessary to assure one every hour of the day that he adores her, she jumps to the conclusion that his affection is dead.

My dear child, there are several other things in the world besides love. Among them is bread and butter, and it is absolutely necessary that John should devote the best of his time and his attention to considering them, unless you want to go hungry. Don't make it hard for him. Don't go off and sulk, or wail out that he doesn't l-l-l-o-o-v-e you any more, boo-hoo, the first time he betrays more interest in the grocery business than he does in your conversation, or prefers reading the paper to holding your hand. Love and caresses are the dessert of existence, delicious in small quantities, but nobody but a schoolgirl wants to make a full meal off them. Be reasonable. It is woman's greatest charm, and the most uncommon.

Take the right start. There's nothing like getting off on the right foot. Don't make a doormat of yourself because you happen to be so desperately in love. There's nothing that a husband acquires so quickly as the habit of walking over his wife if she prostrates herself before him, and invites him to trample on her. You were a woman before you were a wife, and you owe something to your womanhood.

Insist from the very start on a settled allowance for the house and for yourself. That removes you from the list of beggars, and puts you in the ranks of independent women who earn their own livelihood by the prosecution of a pro-

fession. If your husband can only give you a dollar a week, take the dollar, and don't have it doled out in nickels. There is just exactly thirty chances less of friction in getting an allowance once a month than there is in getting money every day. It is a mathematical proposition that should appeal to everybody. And don't inaugurate a bad precedent by telling how every nickel of it went. There are women held to such strict account they have actually to steal and falsify their accounts to get the price of a *matinée* ticket.

I have always rejoiced in the story of the young wife, whose husband presented her with a nice, morocco leather account book, in which she was to enter every cent of money on one page, and every single purchase on the other. At the end of the month he called on her to show her book. She proudly brought it forth, and on one page was written, "Received of John one hundred dollars," and on the other, "Spent it all." That settled it. She had made him comfortable, and that was all he needed to know, and all the details she proposed to give.

Don't permit your husband to use language to you that he would not dare to use to any other lady that had an able-bodied brother. Because a man is married to a woman gives him no right to abandon courtesy and good manners to her. But stick a pin in this, little sister, you must set the example. If you fly out into tantrums and say things that are sharp and disagreeable, you can't expect to get any better than you give. Harsh speeches are an evil brood of chickens that always come home to roost.

Don't let your husband get into the way of thinking any old thing will do for you. You are entitled to a fair share of the pleasures and perquisites of life. Take them. Nothing is so true as that a man accepts his wife at her own valuation. If she keeps young, pretty, bright, attractively gowned, he admires her, and likes to be seen out with her. If she is content to sit, like Cinderella, in the ashes of home, he gets in the way of going out without her and having a

pretty good time. Every bride starts out as a little queen. It is her own fault if she abdicates her throne.

Don't tell your troubles, not even to your mother. It's a temptation, of course. It's so nice and soothing to be pitied, and told one is a martyr, and to weep out one's heart on a sympathetic breast. Don't do it, little girl. That way the divorce court lies. You were angry and hurt with John, and in the first heat of your passion you blurted out the whole story to your dearest friend, in confidence, of course, but she repeated, it, also in confidence, to her best friend, and before you knew it the air was rife with gossip about your marital discord.

Or else you told it to mother, and, not being overwise, she "spoke to John" about it, and the mother-in-law mischief was done. Left to yourselves, John would have said he was a brute, and you would have cried, and the memory of the little shadow would have blotted itself out in the kiss of forgiveness. With other people knowing it and intermeddling and nagging you on to stand up for your rights, and him on to be master of his own house, the end is in sight. Don't let even your mother come between you and your husband.

Attend to your own affairs. The American man, as a general thing, has just all he can do, and it is an outrage for his wife to afflict him with the burden of the housekeeping. Manage your own servants, do your own errands.

Don't talk too much. Of course, being a good little girl, I take it for granted you have no serious secrets to conceal, but it isn't necessary to tell your husband everything you think, especially about other people. Argument is the death of peace and harmony, and don't get into the way of discussing beforehand everything you do. Half the time it doesn't make the least bit of difference one way or the other, but by talking it over you can get up a family squabble.

Finally, remember the advice of the wise woman who was asked to give a formula for managing husbands. She said: "Feed the brute."

Introducing Mr. Travis to Miss Smith

By William MacLeod Raine

THE girl came to the edge of the porch with a pen in her hand, and called to the next cottage.

Travis, sprawling across the way in a hammock, watched admiringly, as he had done a score of times before, the lithe strength of her warm youth, the unconscious pride of her bearing and her tread, and the sense of vividness that seemed to emanate from her.

Taking in with critical eye the cool white of her close-fitting summer piqué relieved by splashes of pink at waist and throat, he felt that she had even above most women the feeling for harmony in dress. What she wore was always simple and effective in making her points go as far as possible, which seemed to him a very long way indeed.

Her entire indifference to his scrutiny and even to his existence piqued Travis a little, though he recognized it as inevitable, since they had never met. Against conformity to this convention he rebelled, for it seemed to him the height of absurdity that two presentable young people should stand on a ceremony fitted neither to the place nor circumstance.

Nancy Smith called twice before a window was thrown up in the next cottage, and a girlish head thrust out.

"I only wanted to ask you how to spell introduce, Kate," Miss Smith called.

"Oh, good gracious, I don't know! I think I would spell it i-n-t-r-o-d-u-s-e, K-a-t-e," laughed the other. "Or perhaps it should be c."

"Thanks, you leave me just where I was before. I believe there should be a c in it, but I'm not sure. It is one of

the words I am always forgetting. We forgot to pack a dictionary, and there isn't one in the house. I know that whichever way is right I'll spell it the other." And a snatch of Miss Smith's silvery laughter rippled across to the young man.

The letter writer retired to the house again. Travis tore a page from his notebook, and scribbled in it:

Introduce, v. t. (Lat. *introducere*, from *intro*, within, and *ducere*, to lead).

1. To make known one person to another; as, "Miss Smith, may I *introduce* Mr. William Travis to you? He has been keen to know you for a long time."

2. To cause to notice something; as "Miss Smith, may I hope that when we meet some day in our rambles you will let me *introduce* to you some of my favorite climbs?"

He subsidized a passing youngster, and sent him over with the slip of paper. Presently the boy came back with the note. There was an added use of the word appended below the two he had given.

3. To bring into vogue a custom; as, "Miss Smith will be glad to have Mr. Travis *introduce* the suggested joint rambles as soon as he can find a common acquaintance to *introduce* him."

Travis could not at once find the necessary common acquaintance. He met Miss Smith walking on the following morning with her collie dog, Bobs. She was in a warm glow from her exercise, and carried herself with the buoyant tread a queen is supposed to have and does not.

He lifted his hat in answer to her cavalier little nod.

"It's a beautiful morning even for Insmont," he said, and if he carelessly barred the way who shall blame him?

Her tantalizing smile flipped through his quickening blood.

"It's a lovely day for walking, but a little cool for standing, don't you think?"

"Unless one is tired," he suggested.

"I never get tired myself, but I have no doubt you will find the scenery restful," she retorted, brushing past him.

"If you are going to walk——" he ventured, suggestively.

She flashed a questioning smile across her shoulder.

"Well, I am thinking of walking, too," he informed her.

"I am thinking of walking one," she laughed. "It's unfortunate that we don't know each other yet."

"I am more than willing to take you on faith," proposed Travis.

"I couldn't think of imposing on your generosity, sir. Come, Bobs!" And Travis was left alone with the scenery.

"She doesn't give a hang for the conventions, but she is delighted to take a fall out of me," reflected that young man, with smiling but rueful appreciation.

The next day Travis "did" Mt. Caroline. It was not much of a climb even as Colorado mountains go. He took the brow of the hill direct, with frequent pauses to look around on the saucer-like basin in which Insmont lay. On every side toward the great hillsides, rugged and scarred with outcropping rock and boulder, in most places bare of vegetation save for the scrub brush, an occasional flash of flaming goldenrod, or here and there a little grove of silver pines. Opposite him a landslide had scorched its way down and flayed the face of the hill.

A cold nose snuggled into Travis' hand. He looked down with a start, to see Bobs with a piece of paper in his mouth. An unsigned penciled appeal was scribbled on it.

"Help, or I shall escape!"

Bobs turned and trotted up the hill. Travis conjectured stimulating conclu-

sions, and followed alertly. He was drawing near the foot of the cliff which crowns the mountain, when a clear voice hailed him.

"Is that you, Mr. Travis?"

He looked up. Miss Smith peered down at him. She was sitting on the edge seventy-five feet above him, with her feet dangling over the precipice and her skirts wrapped close about her.

"It is. Is it you?"

"That's rather fatuous, Mr. Travis. Of course it's I. I'm awfully glad you came. I've been here for an hour like Impatience on a monument. I climbed up, but I've lost my nerve and can't come down the cliff. I was in an awful hole till you came. Really, I'm half starved."

He looked up at her admiringly.

"Yes, I think you have lost your nerve. It looks like it. Don't lean over like that," he added, sharply.

"I'll lean where I please," she retorted, with spirit. "I'm not your sister."

"Thank Heaven, no!" he called back, fervently.

"You needn't be so piously thankful. It's impertinent of you, sir."

"On the contrary, it is the highest compliment I can pay you."

"Oh, if you mean it that way," she dimpled.

"I certainly mean it that way."

"Well, when you have exhausted your repertoire of pretty compliments come up and rescue me," the girl commanded.

"Am I to wait until then?"

"Perhaps you had better not. Come along! We can quarrel easier if we are nearer."

Travis turned and started down the hill.

"Where are you going?" she called.

He stopped, and looked over his shoulder without turning.

"Me? I'm going back to Insmont, to find somebody to introduce me to your mother. She's a little portly for climbing, but I suppose we can rig a derrick and maneuver her up somehow."

"But, gracious me! What do you want her here for?"

"To introduce us, of course. Let's

conform to the proper way of doing things."

"Oh, Bobs is introducing us. You have known him for a week. Don't you hear him bark up at me? He is telling me that, under the circumstances, you are better than no man."

"Thanks! Is it a temporary or a permanent introduction?" asked Travis, suspiciously.

"That will depend."

A jutting boulder served him for a seat.

"On what?"

"For one thing, on how you behave."

"I'll be as bad and interesting as possible," he promised.

"I wonder if your word may be depended on," she doubted. "Suppose we call you a permanent probationer. Now relieve the garrison, please, at once."

His eye wandered hopelessly over the precipitous cliff.

"Did you bring your wings with you, Miss Nancy?"

"Oh, you didn't catch my name right, Mr. Travis. It's Smith. Name suggestive of romance, isn't it?"

"It can be changed," he reminded her.

"If I have any luck," she agreed.

"Oh, the luck would be mine," he murmured.

"I didn't hear that," she called down to him.

"I merely said that I think Nancy is a very pretty name."

"I like Miss Smith better—from strangers," and he wondered if her tone was not meant to convey a slight rebuke.

"I like her, too," Travis acquiesced. "And I am sure I'm going to like her better."

"Thank you. I am afraid I am going to find you have a talent for saying things. For choice, I like men who can do things."

"Then I am sure you'll like me. I am a lawyer, and it is by actions that I make my living," he punned.

"Still promising, Mr. Travis."

"Oh, I perform, too," he assured her, calmly.

"Circus or minstrel troupe?" she flung down at him.

He ignored her sarcasm.

"May I smoke?"

"You had better not at present. Your chance for action is knocking at the door. Make good, sir!"

"I can think better when I am smoking."

"I don't want you to think too much. You must not run a risk of brain fever on my account. I won't have it."

"I really don't see how I am to get you down," he said, at length, between puffs.

She folded her hands.

"I'm not interested in the method. The responsibility is yours to get me down, or perish in the attempt."

"You wouldn't like to have me perish, would you?"

"Not till after you get me down. By the way, are you insured?"

"Yes, but I shan't be able to collect if I commit suicide."

"No, I don't see how you can," she admitted.

"I mean that my policy is forfeitable in that contingency." He arose and buttoned his coat. "We who are about to die salute thee, Caesar," he quoted.

"Since you are a lawyer I suppose, of course, you haven't your will made," she jeered.

He mapped out his route with keen eye, and came up, hanging to broken rock and projecting shrub. Twenty feet from the base he stopped.

"By the way, I forgot to ask. What do I get for rescuing you?"

"Get? Oh, prosaic twentieth century money grubber! Don't you think of anything but getting? In olden times a knight rescued a maiden in distress and received the consciousness of duty done."

"Usually he got the maiden's hand, too, didn't he?"

"Well, you shall have mine—to help me down."

It was for the most part not very difficult climbing, but there was a bad place or two. Once when he slipped and sent a stone rattling down, her heart stood still. But he noted that she neither screamed nor shouted a warning to him.

Five minutes later he stood panting beside her.

She offered him her hand, and an enigmatic smile.

"Thanks, Gen. Buller."

"Because I have relieved Lady Smith?" he wanted to know.

"Perhaps."

"Or because I dilly-dallied so long at it," he proposed, as an alternative.

"Oh, I think you climb splendidly. I don't believe I could have done it," she told him, with enthusiasm.

"But you did it, didn't you?"

"No, I came up by the path that leads round behind."

He turned and took in silently the gentle declivity in the rear. Presently he said, coldly: "It's rather on me, isn't it? I hope I performed to your taste."

She looked at him slantingly under most distracting lashes.

"Now you're angry. Lots of men I know would be glad to climb that little bluff without any fuss."

"I dare say. I'm not lots of men," he said, shortly.

"I suppose you think I made a fool of you."

"Far be it from me to contradict you," he answered.

"Now you're being horrid. I'm sorry I was nice to you if you're that kind of a person. My friends all have a sense of humor. Why, I would climb that little hill myself. I'll go back that way."

"You won't," he told her, curtly.

She looked at him with scorching eyes.

"How dare you tell me I won't? I'll do whatever I like. I don't listen to or accept the advice of strangers."

"I am a stranger now, am I?" he asked.

She turned on him, her pink finger nails buried in the palms of her hands, her angry eyes ready for tears.

"I hate you. I wish I had never spoken to you. I didn't think you were the kind to take advantage of it." And with that she flung round and marched away.

"*A la Sarah Bernhardt in tragedy,*" he called after her. To himself he thought: "No goddess ever walked bet-

ter than my angry beauty. Her flashing eyes suit that crown of dark red hair admirably."

He seated himself on a fallen tree, and pulled a magazine from his pocket, simulating deepest interest in a story. She, twenty feet away, gave an undivided attention to cloud effects. Each of them, acutely conscious of the other's presence, desired it understood that he or she was oblivious of it.

Travis presently began to fear that she would soon leave, and strolled over to the pile of boulders where she was seated. He stood with his hands in his coat pockets and looked down into the valley far beneath them. A train was twisting along Platte Canyon following the course of the glinting thread of the silvery river.

"Might be a jointed snake," he volunteered, referring to the cars.

Her chin was in her hand, and she took in the scenery with silent devotion.

"When the train comes winding up the canyon it reminds me sometimes of the game Crack-the-whip. I'm always expecting to see the last car swing off into the river, but somehow it never does. The engineer is in the habit of shaking hands with the brakeman in the last car, they say."

The silence was more accentuated than before.

"Mr. Travis humbly regrets his inability to appreciate a joke," he continued, "and solemnly promises to understand the next one that Miss Smith perpetrates."

"I didn't think you would be so huffy about a little thing," she said, relenting to speech.

"Nobody likes to be laughed at—especially by you," he justified, sliding in his little compliment.

"It is quite unreasonable for me to be disappointed in you, because we are not likely to see much of each other."

"I fancy we shall see a good deal of each other," he smiled.

She shook her head decisively.

"No, I'm not going to like you."

"Oh, yes, you are," he told her, cheerfully.

"You seem very sure." Her amused eyes took him in curiously.

He sidetracked that question.

"So you are disappointed in me. Disappointment implies interest."

"It implies also a diminishing interest."

"Perhaps it might be stimulated again."

"I don't know. Usually, things are not so worth while after you have got them as before."

"So you thought me worth while?"

"Well, anybody could see you were dying to meet me," she explained. "And you are the only man here. The rest are boys. Then, when I play at make-believe to give you a chance to know me you grow dreadfully literal and sulky. That spoils it all."

"It was dreadfully stupid of me. You gave me a chance to scale the cliff between us and I muffed it. I don't deserve to have the pleasure of knowing you, do I?"

"No, you don't," she agreed, promptly.

"It hasn't been my experience that people get the things they deserve in this world. In this case I get another chance."

"You are very generous to yourself," she smiled, scornfully.

"I'm going to be good."

"And do whatever I tell you?"

"Yes."

The girl looked over the edge of the cliff.

"Very well. We'll go down there together."

"And give another lovers' leap to tourists," he laughed. "I know seventeen such cliffs already in Colorado, eight in California, two in——"

"That isn't my idea, Mr. Travis. We're not going to jump, but to climb down," she interrupted.

He looked quickly at her. "You don't really mean it, Miss Smith."

"I do mean it. Are you going to hedge? You know you promised," she reminded him, sharply.

"You are a good climber, are you not?"

"I've been up Long's and Gray's Peaks."

"Very well. I stand by my promise."

They took the cliff leisurely, and Travis soon appreciated that there was strength as well as beauty in the girl's lithe grace. She disdained help, and swung from root to rock with an agility that surprised him in one so slender. At the foot they sat on an outcropping edge of rock and pretended to rest.

A warm, untempered sunlight bathed the land. The deep blue sky above, dashed here and there by a mass of billowy whiteness, or flecked with mackerel clouds, stretched down to the sharply silhouetted mountain edge. A peace strange and immense rested over the land.

"Elysium, isn't it?" said Travis.

The girl nodded. "I'd agree more unreservedly if there were only a half-way house where one might hold them up for a lunch," she sighed.

Travis dived into his pocket and disclosed a tissue-paper clad sandwich. She broke it in two parts and they devoured it to the last crumb.

"I think you are an angel," she said, between bites.

"I'm not far from one," he agreed, smiling at her. "When you look at me like that you are making a lariat of your eyes," he added.

"A lariat of my eyes. What a pretty conceit! Isn't that a rope with which they catch calves?" she mocked.

"Calves and other animals."

Their talk grew desultory and irrelevant with long, full-pulsed silences between the snatches of conversation. The sense of a vivid moment was strongly on them both together with a constraint that eclipsed their frankness.

"We must be going," she said, to relieve the situation.

He leaped to his feet, and offered his hands to assist her to rise. "Come!" he said.

The young man drew her to her feet and held her little brown hands tightly in his. She tried to look at him, but her lashes drooped. For the first time in her life she could not meet a man's eyes for fear of what he might read in hers.

Her blood was tingling with an electric thrill. She thought she wanted to take her hands from him, but to her surprise her strength deserted her.

"You must not do that," she said, as quietly as she could. "I am not that sort of girl."

"No, I must not do that," he agreed, but he did not release her hands. "I know you are not that kind. But—" He stopped, eyes devouring the sun-kissed burning cheek, the warm eyes, the dark, red-shot hair.

"But what?" the girl asked. Then added, simply: "You are hurting my hands."

Travis knew that the moment was charged with emotion to her as to him, and that there was in her the unconscious desire that he would make the most of it. But he knew, too, that if he did she would not soon forgive herself, and that it might mark the end of their acquaintance. The young man set his teeth on the temptation to snatch her to him, to smother with kisses the pretty mouth, the scorching lids, the eyes no longer cool and frank, but shy and eager.

He released her hands, and turned away with a nervous laugh.

"Don't you think we had better start?" he said, shortly.

They clambered down the hill with much of the broken small talk by which people are wont to relieve an embarrassed situation. If he took her hand to help her across a fallen log he dropped

it immediately afterward. Their eyes refused to meet, or if they met for an instant were full of consciousness.

In the last grove of quaking aspens he found voice to touch again the pulse of their emotion.

"We're almost back at Insmont. My sunshiny hour is almost over. You won't forget to-day, will you?"

"No, I won't forget. It is not often I meet anybody so rude and so interesting as you. How can I forget it?" she said, attempting lightness.

"Nor I," he told her. "I've got to-day fenced off from all the yesterdays and to-morrows of life."

Her blood warmed to his words, but she kept her head.

"You are an Irishman by descent, Mr. Travis. I think your ancestors must have kissed the blarney stone."

They came out from the aspens to the railway track. Fifty yards from them a group of young people were strolling toward them.

"I am telling the sober truth," he said, looking straight into her eyes. "When shall I see you again, Miss Smith?"

"I think that will lie with you, Mr. Travis," the girl answered.

"Then if it lies with me, I say as soon and as often as possible."

"You say a good deal of nonsense," said Nancy, blushing.

"And more that isn't nonsense," he replied.

MIZPAH

WHEN Morn comes down her yellow stairs, and frets

With ruddy candle-gleams the drowsy glen;

When Noonday mends her twisted-copper nets

To snare the shadows' nimble feet; and when

Night's wet black tresses drive across the sea,

The Lord keep watch betwixt us—thée and me.

HARRIET WHITNEY.

MR. STEINMANN'S CORNER

By Alfred Sutro

Author of "Beneath the Moon," "The Cave of Illusions," Etc.

SCENE: *A sumptuously furnished drawing-room in MRS. HARDWICKE'S house in Pont Street. The appointments are of the conventional order, destitute of individual taste or selection; and there is a curious absence of the feminine touches where-with a woman will beautify a room.*

MRS. HARDWICKE is seated at a small table, diligently embroidering a white silk cloth. She is a well-preserved woman of forty, with regular, set features, dark-brown hair, and very light-blue eyes. Her movements, even when lifting the scissors from the table, raising or lowering her needle, are deliberate and precise. She pauses in her work, and glances at the clock; then sews on, calmly and imperturbably. After a time she rises, presses an electric bell, and returns to her seat. JOSEPH, the butler, an old, pleasant-looking man, enters.

MRS. HARDWICKE—It is nine o'clock, Joseph; Mr. Hardwicke will have dined. You can clear away downstairs.

JOSEPH—Yes, madam. *(He turns to go, then pauses, and listens)*—I think I hear his latchkey, ma'am.

MRS. HARDWICKE—Ah—— Then perhaps you had better wait.

(She resumes her sewing; after a moment PERCY HARDWICKE comes in. He is at least five years younger than his wife, and must have been exceedingly handsome in his youth. At present his hair has receded, and grown gray at the temples; there are heavy lines around his mouth and on his forehead, and his eyes have the tired look of a man who finds little in this world that he loves to gaze upon. He enters

hurriedly, evidently under stress of great excitement, but stops abruptly on seeing JOSEPH. His wife does not rise, or lay down her needle, but she glances quietly at him.)

MRS. HARDWICKE—Have you dined, Percy? I told Joseph to keep—

PERCY—Yes, yes; thanks. All right, Joseph.

JOSEPH—I can get you some dinner in five minutes, sir.

PERCY—No, no; thanks—no—I have dined.

(JOSEPH stays a moment deprecatingly—PERCY waves him impatiently aside, and he goes. MRS. HARDWICKE sews steadily. PERCY strips off his gloves, and rolls them into a ball; he passes his hand over his forehead, and for a moment seems to be catching his breath, and trying to master himself. His face is very haggard, and there is a twitching of the lower lip that he apparently cannot control. He takes a step towards his wife, pauses, looks around the room, then suddenly stamps his foot.)

PERCY—For God's sake, put away that sewing!

MRS. HARDWICKE *(in genuine amazement)*—Percy!

PERCY—I'm ruined; I can't meet my differences to-morrow, I shall be hampered——

MRS. HARDWICKE—What!

(The embroidery slips from her hand and falls on to the floor; her large, pale eyes open wide, and for the briefest instant become full of expression. She masters herself quickly, however, and her voice, when she speaks, betrays neither emotion nor sympathy.)

MRS. HARDWICKE—How has this happened?

PERCY (*with one hand pressed to his brow*)—I was a bear of two thousand Cordovas—

MRS. HARDWICKE—Steinmann's mine!

PERCY—Yes. A swindle, of course, like all his things. But he's cornered me, and a lot of others. They've fixed to-morrow for special settlement. The buying-in price is twenty-five.

MRS. HARDWICKE—Twenty-five!

PERCY—Yes.

MRS. HARDWICKE—And you sold at—

PERCY—One and a half.

MRS. HARDWICKE (*scornfully*)—One and a half! So you have to pay nearly fifty thousand pounds!

PERCY (*doggedly*)—And I'm thirty thousand short. Things haven't gone well with me lately

(*There is silence; Mrs. HARDWICKE picks up her embroidery; but lets her hands lie idle in her lap. Her face is impassive; she does not look at her husband. He is evidently relieved at having told his story, and lets himself drop into a chair.*)

PERCY—A horrible swindle, of course—that goes without saying! Ricketts, Blandly, Travers, Helbin—we're all caught. Steinmann's got us!

MRS. HARDWICKE (*quietly*)—Is there no chance of the committee—

PERCY—No—they won't interfere. I must buy in at twenty-five—or—

(*He leaves his sentence unfinished, and looks eagerly at his wife.*)

MRS. HARDWICKE (*harshly*)—Steinmann! You might have known!

PERCY—It's easy to say that now. We thought—

MRS. HARDWICKE—If you had done me the honor to consult me—

PERCY—I wish to God I had!

MRS. HARDWICKE—My father always talked these matters over. But you—

PERCY (*fretfully*)—Oh, it's no use bringing that up now. And I've been an ass, of course. But the thing was so barefaced! Every paper down on the mine—not a penny of public money

in it! Steinmann and his gang hold every share.

MRS. HARDWICKE (*with a touch of sarcasm*)—Naturally.

PERCY—We thought he was on his last legs. He went round borrowing, mortgaging—he has plotted this thing for the last six months.

MRS. HARDWICKE—Oh, yes—he's clever!

PERCY—Clever! Curse him!

(*There is silence again; Mrs. HARDWICKE resumes her sewing. PERCY mops his handkerchief over his forehead, rises, steadies himself against the chair, and walks up to his wife. He tries to speak firmly, but his voice is very unsteady.*)

PERCY—Will you see me through this, Maria?

MRS. HARDWICKE (*with unfeigned astonishment*)—I! (*For an instant she pauses in her work, and looks at PERCY; then gives a gentle shrug, and goes on sewing.*)

PERCY—The firm is Marriott & Hardwicke, you know—your father's name is in it.

MRS. HARDWICKE (*coldly*)—My father is dead.

PERCY—There is my name, too.

MRS. HARDWICKE—You should have thought of that before.

PERCY (*humbly*)—You have a hundred and fifty thousand pounds. If you will lend me thirty—

MRS. HARDWICKE (*with a half smile*)—Lend!

PERCY (*eating the leak*)—Or give—it means the same thing, I suppose—I promise you that I will be—eternally grateful. (MRS. HARDWICKE *sews on, and gives no sign.*) There is nothing in the world that you shall ever ask of me—nothing, nothing— You will do this for me, Maria? It means life or death to me, almost. If they hammer me—

MRS. HARDWICKE (*her eyes fixed on her work*)—Steinmann is known as a rogue; you will have every one's sympathy.

PERCY (*trying to keep calm*)—You don't seem to understand. There is the dishonor.

MRS. HARDWICKE—My dear Percy, this is mere sentiment. Numbers of men have been hammered; it all depends on what the cause has been. You will go through it like the others. I will help you pay ten shillings in the pound.

PERCY (*angrily*)—Ten shillings in the pound!

MRS. HARDWICKE—And afterwards give you enough to begin again, although, really— But perhaps you will be wiser in future.

PERCY (*with increasing agitation*)—Look here, you mean well, I know. And of course there's some truth in what you say. But perhaps the one thing that's good in me is the pride I have in my name. It has never been disgraced before. And you see, every one knows that your father left you all his money—besides land and houses— Don't you understand? No one will believe that you have—refused to help me. They will say that I—sheltered myself—behind you.

MRS. HARDWICKE—It doesn't matter what people say. One has to act wisely.

PERCY—There is a child upstairs, too. You will be putting a stigma upon him—

MRS. HARDWICKE (*unable to repress a smile*)—Stigma, stigma! My dear Percy! You forget that I am a daughter of the Stock Exchange. Stigma! Why, I have known dozens of men—

PERCY (*violently*)—Who were hammered, and didn't mind—dishonored, and didn't care. Well, I'm not one of them. I do care. And you are my wife. The money is yours, of course, but I am your husband—I have a certain claim. If you hadn't the money, the thing would be different. But, as it is, it's impossible. You must see that. People would point their finger at me. It's disgrace, sheer disgrace. There's only one way of looking at it.

MRS. HARDWICKE (*imperturbably*)—I am sorry that I cannot agree with you.

PERCY—Then for once you must accept my guidance.

MRS. HARDWICKE (*looking up, with an indulgent smile*)—My dear Percy!

PERCY (*doggedly*)—My guidance.

Women don't understand these things. You evidently don't realize that if you refuse to lend me this money—

MRS. HARDWICKE—Make Steinmann a present of thirty thousand pounds!

PERCY—It doesn't matter whom it goes to. It saves me, and your child, from dishonor.

MRS. HARDWICKE (*dryly*)—I have already told you that I do not consider it dishonor.

PERCY—Of that I am the better judge. As your husband—

MRS. HARDWICKE—My dear friend, you have said that before. I should have thought that you knew me well enough to be aware that when I say "No," I mean "No."

(*She half turns from him, as though to indicate that the discussion is ended. There is silence; she sews, and sews; her needle rises and falls methodically, her breath comes regularly and calmly. PERCY stands, watching her. Suddenly a strange rush of color comes into his face; the veins in his forehead swell; he goes close to her, and grips her chair.*)

PERCY (*passionately*)—If you refuse me this money, you are no longer my wife.

MRS. HARDWICKE (*calmly*)—Don't be melodramatic, Percy.

PERCY (*raising his hand*)—I swear to God—

MRS. HARDWICKE—Don't. And there is no need for the servants to hear. All this is childish. Our marriage was a marriage of reason. We are not-sentimental lovers; we are reasonable people—partners. You are too excited tonight to be able to consider this matter calmly. I will go to my room.

PERCY (*wildly*)—Maria—

MRS. HARDWICKE—Should you be gone to-morrow before I come down, you will let me know in the course of the morning how much you need to make up the ten-shillings in the pound, and I will send you a check. And, as I told you, afterwards, when the formality—has been gone through, I will give you enough to start again. Good-night.

PERCY—Stop. Think well of what you are doing. You refuse?

MRS. HARDWICKE—I refuse. Good-night.

(She has gathered up her belongings, and goes, calmly, without a backward glance. The door opens, and shuts; she is gone. PERCY sinks into a chair, and for a minute or two stares blankly before him. He holds up his hand and looks at it; crosses and uncrosses his leg; yawns vaguely once or twice, then remembers, with a violent start. JOSEPH comes in.)

JOSEPH—There is a lady to see you, sir.

PERCY—What?

JOSEPH—Yes, sir—a lady.

PERCY—To see me—at this hour.

JOSEPH—Yes, sir. She must see you, she says.

PERCY—Me—not Mrs. Hardwicke?

JOSEPH—You, sir; and alone, she said.

PERCY—This is very strange. Didn't she give a name?

JOSEPH—No, sir. She has a gentleman with her. I've shown them into the library, sir.

PERCY—There's a gentleman, eh? You didn't mention him. All right, I'll go down. (He tries to rise, but faintness comes over him, and he has to hold on to the chair.) Better ask them to come up here, Joseph.

(JOSEPH goes. PERCY sits, and rests listlessly in his chair, motionless, as though his mind were a blank. The door opens; JOSEPH enters, followed by a lady who is heavily veiled. PERCY does not move, or seem to notice. The lady remains standing in the middle of the room; JOSEPH goes to his master, and touches him on the shoulder.)

JOSEPH—The lady, sir.

PERCY (with a start)—Oh—— (He rises, with difficulty, and takes a step forward—to the lady.) I beg your pardon——

(JOSEPH goes. As the door closes, the lady lifts her veil.)

PERCY—Nora!

(He staggers back, in utter bewilderment. The woman he looks upon is tall, slender and graceful; a girl of twenty-four. Heavy masses of waving black hair inclose a face that is very pale, and

bears signs of illness and suffering. Her dark-gray eyes are strangely bright and arresting. At present, as she unflinchingly meets PERCY's gaze, a faint smile softens the haughty curves of her arched upper lip.)

PERCY—Nora!

NORA (quietly)—Yes; it is I!

PERCY—You here—in my house—to-night!

NORA—You are in trouble.

(For an instant they stand, looking at each other. PERCY is feverishly agitated, NORA deeply tranquil.)

NORA—Mr. Steinmann dined with us last night—he has told me——

PERCY—Steinmann!

NORA—Yes. He has ruined you? Caught you in a trap? (PERCY nods.) Well, I have set you free. Look.

(She takes from her bosom a paper, which she places in his hand. PERCY glances at it, then stares blankly at her.)

PERCY—What does this mean?

NORA—He explained it to me, but you know how stupid I am. It seems that you sold two thousand shares that you haven't got; and now they are very dear, and you have to buy them back. Is that right?

PERCY—Yes. But how——

NORA—Well, that paper, he says, sells the shares back to you at the price you sold them at. It's very simple, when you understand it.

PERCY (pressing his hand to his forehead)—Why did Steinmann give you this paper?

NORA—I made it a condition.

PERCY—A condition?

NORA—Yes. He wants me to marry him.

PERCY—What! Marry Steinmann! You!

(He staggers back, and lets himself fall into a chair. NORA remains standing.)

NORA—And I have said that I would.

PERCY—I don't understand. How came you to know Steinmann?

NORA—When my father died I went to live with my brother. Six months ago he brought Mr. Steinmann home, and since then he has come very often.

He asked me to marry him—I refused. My brother was angry. He told Mr. Steinmann—about you.

PERCY—That I had—

NORA—Thrown me over, yes, to marry the daughter of a rich stockbroker. And to-night Mr. Steinmann came to me very triumphantly, and told me what he had done. He thought I hated you.

PERCY—And you don't.

NORA—Apparently not. I told him I would marry him, if he gave me that paper.

PERCY (*aghast*)—Marry him—to save me!

NORA—That's my revenge.

PERCY—My God, if you wanted revenge, you've had it already! Marry Steinmann—you! Doesn't he know my wife is rich?

NORA—He was sure that she wouldn't help you! That is so, I suppose? He was so certain!

PERCY—And he consented to—give you this paper?

NORA—Oh, yes. After a time. He seems very fond of me.

PERCY—That frog! And your brother is willing?

NORA—Delighted.

PERCY—Faugh! It is he who is waiting downstairs?

NORA—Yes. I made that condition, too. I wanted to come and tell you myself. It was mean, perhaps, but you see I wanted my revenge.

PERCY—You must find some other way, Nora.

(*He rises, tears the paper into little pieces, and lets them flutter on to the floor.*)

NORA (*laughing quietly*)—That doesn't matter. He won't take your money.

PERCY (*violently*)—Are you mad? Do you know what you're doing? Do you know what all this means?

NORA—Oh, yes! I'm not a child.

PERCY—Look here—my marriage has not been happy. Be warned by that. I tell you, where there's no love, it's just hell—

(*NORA laughs again.*)

PERCY (*fretfully*)—All this is be-

yond me. I'm not very fit to-night—my head isn't clear.

NORA—It is clear enough to remember what happened between us four years ago?

PERCY—I behaved like a blackguard, of course. I threw you over. I went to you, and asked you to release me.

NORA—And we have never met since then, have we? These four years, it would seem, have not been too pleasant for either of us. I waited for my revenge; and now it has come I take it.

PERCY—All this is absurd. You've no conception of what it means. There's more in marriage than going to church, and sitting at the same table.

NORA—Oh, I know!

PERCY—You talk like a child.

NORA—I'm twenty-four.

PERCY—You think you're acting beautifully, that it's noble self-sacrifice, and so forth. It's nothing of the kind. It's hideous and beastly, that's what it is—as bad as my own marriage, and worse.

NORA—You married to get money, not to serve me.

PERCY—Well, that was more sensible—yes, it was. Why should you serve me? What am I to you?

NORA—The man I love.

(*PERCY drops into a chair, and hangs his head.*)

NORA—It's strange, isn't it? But that's how it is. And so, to do you this service, notwithstanding yourself and in spite of yourself, gives me pleasure.

(*He tries to speak, she holds up her hand.*)

NORA—You need say nothing. This is your punishment. I command you to accept this favor from me, the woman you flung aside, so that you might marry the stockbroker's daughter. I took it very quietly, did I not? I made no scene. We had been engaged for six months. Then you came, and snapped me in two. This is the first day I have lived, since then.

PERCY—I know I behaved like a cad.

NORA—And it's sweet to me to feel that the money *she* refused—she, who could spare it so well—I bring you; I,

at the cost of myself. And you dare not refuse.

PERCY (*feebly*)—Dare not?

NORA—No.

PERCY—And why?

NORA—Because of the wrong you have done me. I have waited a very long time; it is my turn now. Ah, you are too proud to accept this service from me! Where was your pride when you broke my heart? You will do as I tell you, Percy.

PERCY (*going towards her*)—Listen, Nora, there are other ways. As I look at you I realize—oh, bitterly enough!—what a fool I have been. I will go away with you, if you like.

NORA—Go away?

PERCY—Yes—to America, anywhere. My wife would divorce me. We could get married.

NORA—No.

PERCY—Why? If you love me—

NORA—Ah, had you come to me, any time these four years, I would have gone with you! But not now. Your love was a puny thing, Percy—you had forgotten.

PERCY—No.

NORA—What did it mean to you, after all? A meek little girl in a corner, who raised her lips to be kissed. A timid little person, who wasn't clever, who had only her pretty face! Well, there it is. Things have changed now, you see. I speak, and you obey.

PERCY—Don't you see that I can't! It's impossible!

NORA—You must. Steinmann is ugly; he blots out the sunshine. He eats with his knife; he talks a strange jargon of German and English. But I shall marry him. Besides, he adores me. I'm not sure that he will be happy.

PERCY (*desperately*)—All this is horrible—monstrous—

NORA—Why? I must marry some one—my brother is tired of having to keep me. And I have no talents. I shall be Mrs. Steinmann; so you may tell the stockbroker's daughter you don't need her money.

PERCY—Nora, Nora, I beg of you—

NORA—My dear Percy, what is the

use? And remember, no one will know. Steinmann won't speak; he won't want people to learn how much he has paid for his wife. It will remain a secret between us three. I talked it all over with him. You are quite helpless. He wrote a letter to-night to his brokers, to say that your contract was canceled. I posted that letter myself.

PERCY—Then the paper you gave me—

NORA—He called it a formal acknowledgment. I knew you would tear it, of course; so I made him write it out twice. I've the other one here. (*She points to her bosom.*) Some day I shall send it to you.

PERCY—Why?

NORA—I may want a service, perhaps—who knows? Till then— Ah, Percy, Percy, what a love you threw away!

(*She goes quickly to him, flings her arms around his neck, kisses him passionately on the lips; then drops her veil, flits through the door and down the stairs, leaving PERCY standing for some minutes completely dazed and stunned. After a time the other door, leading to the inner room, opens, and MRS. HARDWICKE appears. PERCY glances at her, but does not move.*)

MRS. HARDWICKE (*consulting a paper that she holds in her hand*)—Ah, Percy, I thought you might still be up. And perhaps you are in a more reasonable frame of mind. I have been going into figures. I find that in order to pay ten shillings in the pound you will require—

(PERCY bursts into loud laughter—MRS. HARDWICKE looks up.)

PERCY (*roughly*)—You needn't trouble.

MRS. HARDWICKE—I beg your pardon?

PERCY—Some one has been here, and has left a message for you. I was to tell the stockbroker's daughter that I shouldn't need her money. Good-night.

(*He goes off, unsteadily, through the inner door; MRS. HARDWICKE, completely dazed, collapses into a chair.*)

CURTAIN.

Some Dramatic Disappointments

By Alan Dale

REFORMERS, as a rule, are a somewhat exhilarating people, for the reason that sincerity, in any shape, has the effect of a tonic, in these lackadaisical times. Gentlemen who yearn to rehabilitate our souls, are no whit less interesting than those who clamor to improve our bodies. It is only when the reformer knits his brow, dons a thoughtful aspect, and announces his designs upon an unregenerate stage, that the line supposed to separate the sublime from the ridiculous, is apparently effaced. The odd thing about the stage reformer is that no sooner has he fixed his life-saving apparatus upon the giddy old footlights, than his designs seem to peter out into mere—stationery. Hand-some stationery with ornate headings, and nice thick type is issued, and upon this cream-laid luxury, the dramatic Martin Luther proceeds to give himself away.

Impossible to escape this stationery. It bombards your mail. It haunts you at breakfast, and at luncheon, and at dinner. Soon, you begin to dread your daily letters. Nothing on earth, except perhaps the hilarious cereal, wastes so much valuable ink, as the stage reformer. Plans, schemes, Utopian ideas, bombastic aspiration—all begin in stationery. I am bound to admit that they generally end there, too.

The latest would-be reformer, has been—please note the “has been”—Mr. Sydney Rosenfeld, whose stationery was really beautiful. On the thickest and creamiest of paper he set forth roseate schemes, in which he gave the commercial stage verbal knockout drops, and opened up alluring vistas, in charming perspective. In ornamental type,

nonflaring but elegant, he promised us a neat set of things, called the “Century Players.” Such stationery! At first, you had vague ideas of collecting it, and binding it into an album for future reference. Soon, however, as it began to flow in a steady and relentless stream, your chief aim in life was to dodge it. Personally, I felt relieved when after opening an envelope, I discovered a mere gas bill, instead of an announcement of the “Century Players.”

In the wake of all this stationery came two performances! The “Century Players” gave us a most non-revolutionary production of Mr. William Shakespeare’s “Much Ado About Nothing,” upon the program of which, Mr. Sydney Rosenfeld’s name appeared in fat, big letters, and Shakespeare’s, in thin, small ones. The other offering on the shrine of pure art, was a peevish, fractious, unrehearsed representation of the lugubrious thing, by the Scandinavian pessimist, known as Ibsen, called “Rosmersholm.”

Had there been less stationery New York might have been more attentive. Reformers and salvation mongers must not protest too much. If Joan of Arc had given herself away on stationery, history would probably have dealt with her less seriously. However, the indications are that if Joan had intended to save the stage, she would possibly have drenched her schemes in ink. They all do. It is a sort of mania.

The performance of “Much Ado About Nothing” was by no means reformatory, but it was enjoyable. Mr. Rosenfeld, by his protestations, had hurt himself. Few took him at his own estimate of his own importance. Those who

try to kick down old institutions must at least build up new ones. In "Much Ado," Mr. Rosenfeld reared no new edifice. It was a comfortable entertainment, marred by inartistic music that a "commercial" manager would never have countenanced.

Miss Jessie Millward, who recently tried "starring," under the auspices of the "commercial," was cast as *Beatrice*, and a chubby actor, Mr. William Morris, whom the wildest flights of imagination could never have dreamed of in such a rôle, was set forth as *Benedick*.

Even with these handicaps, "Much Ado About Nothing" went fairly well, for the small parts were discreetly played, and good work was achieved. As a means of salvation, however, this strangely selected comedy was woefully lacking, and—and—the stage remained unregenerate. Across the street, from the Princess Theater, where Mr. Rosenfeld's process of uplifting was waged, mere money was being coined by "The County Chairman." Farther up the "white streak," the managerial pocketbook was simply bursting to the tunes of "The Yankee Consul."

In an effort to live up to his stationery, Mr. Rosenfeld then produced "Rosmersholm," an Ibsen play with which New York is unfamiliar. Long-haired freaks, who like to see the Scandinavian broom pushed into the darkest crannies of poor human frailty, still shirked the "Century Players." Even at a reluctant *matinée*, Ibsen's "Rosmersholm" would have received more attention than was accorded to it at the Princess Theater.

This play is warranted to plunge the lightest heart into the thickest shadows. It seems to be a sort of glorification of suicide. One occurs before the curtain rises; two are noted when the "play" ends. The cast contains six people. The other four, Mr. Ibsen allows to live. I don't know why. Perhaps he thought that they were not good enough for suicide. That luxury was reserved for the leading "him and her."

Why an institution, announcing elevation as its aim—or stationery—should select "Rosmersholm" as a vehicle for the betterment of things, goodness only

knows. I don't. "Rosmersholm" gave me one of the worst headaches, following upon a strenuous attack of the blues, that I have suffered in many a long day. The hopeless Ibsen jargon, of "living out one's life," seemed particularly excruciating, and the hero, who was forty-three years old, and had never laughed, made his greatest hit when he jumped into the millrace.

Miss Florence Kahn, a monotonous young person; William Morris, Theodore Roberts, Martin L. Alsop, Sheridan Tupper and Grace Gayler Clark, were the "Century Players" of this occasion. It was a very sad, and awe-inspiring occasion.

Yet, in spite of all—yea, even setting aside mountains of stationery—one is bound to realize that Mr. Rosenfeld's aim was a good one. When I said above, that it was a case of "has been," I allude to the short season at the Princess. I am informed that this is not the end. However, there is no more stationery dribbling in. If Rosenfeld, who, in reality, is an alert and resourceful person, will do things, instead of saying them, there is no reason why he should not be seriously received. For such an undertaking as he attempted, almost unlimited capital is necessary. Equally necessary is it to avoid conveying the impression that we are taking medicine—for our health.

That the stage needs a tonic is a fact. That it has needed a tonic, periodically, for various decades, is another fact. Perhaps it is a case of an occasional pick-me-up. To tell us drastically that we are going to be reformed in spite of ourselves, is to inspire us with "cussedness." This is a great mistake. Less stationery, more capital, fewer promises, and the "Century Players," or any other set of stage folk, may make their appeal to us.

In the meantime, the stage is still—er—unregenerate. The heathen are having a good time, in their own barbarous way, and—nothing has happened to elevate us hydraulically.

Two odd occurrences, labeled "money to burn," must at this point be chronicled. If poor Sydney Rosenfeld had

owned these two barrels' full, what might he not have achieved? The capitalists in question were Mrs. Katherine Kennedy and Mr. Wright Lorimer. The former placed herself at the head of an expensive cast at the Garrick Theater, where she tried to loom from the top of the ladder—forgetting the lower rungs—in a blood-curdling thing called "The Ruling Power"; the latter ensconced himself, with magnificent scenery, and all the accessories of a most elaborate and artistic production, in the Knickerbocker Theater, where he announced a dramatization of the Bible, entitled "The Shepherd King."

Place aux dames! Mrs. Kennedy bust upon our astonished view as a full-fledged "star." We had never heard of her before, but were quite willing to accept a revelation. Experience may have taught us that revelation is rarity, but we were joyously prepared for the worst—I mean the best. "The Ruling Power" came from the pen—whether it dripped or simply dropped, deponent sayeth not—of an erstwhile dramatic critic, Mr. Elwyn A. Barron.

Rumor had it that Mrs. Kennedy was an ardent Christian Scientist, and when I heard that, I confidently expected a dose of the "absent treatment." Even as I sat in the theater, I fully anticipated waves of enthusiasm and sympathy to swamp me, and overcome my "mortal error." As the play proceeded, however, in a talky exposition of hypnotism and poppycock, I gradually arrived at the conclusion that I must be a very bad lot.

Nothing could make me approve that play. The first act lasted for a huge, teeming hour, and if anybody was "willing" that I should applaud, I am sorry to say that the effort was absolutely unavailing. The drama was quite hopeless, and the hypnotist who alienated the affections of an ingenuous young husband from his wife, and sought out the lady on his own account, was such a preposterously uninteresting person that he fell by the play-side.

Mrs. Kennedy herself, the self-avowed "star," proved to be a young woman with as much assurance as cash. I

waited for one symptom of that "ineffable something" we call the "divine spark," but I waited in vain. She seemed to be a pleasant person, able to commit a long rôle to memory, and to go through it inoffensively. That was all. There was no illumination, no color, no warmth. She was well-bred and easy, but perfectly bivalent. The train of mental reasoning that led her to hanker for stellar glories would be an interesting one to study. But it would belong to the domain of pure psychology.

Much money must have been spent—in these hard times, too! When one thinks of the thousands of East Side unfortunates, in the toils of rapacious landlords, writhing at increased rentals of two dollars a month, it is impossible to avoid certain reflections on the subject of this histrionic outlay. Naturally, such thoughts are absurd and unjust. Mrs. Kennedy has the absolute right to spend her money as she chooses. We do not think things when we see lordly automobiles careering down Fifth Avenue or watch the erection of illustrious palaces. We are utterly in the wrong when we indulge in these reflections anent a costly, but futile, stage production.

Still, we indulge in them! We can't always think the right thing, at the right time!

Then there was Mr. Wright Lorimer, who is quite a young man, at the Knickerbocker. Like Sydney Rosenfeld, Mr. Lorimer believes in stationery—which seems to suggest that he has notions of reforming us. His production of "The Shepherd King," by Arnold Reeves and himself, was, from a scenic point of view, most sumptuous.

That he deserves credit for an artistic expenditure of money is certain. So many theatrical people, to whom dollars are no object, are unable to do more than recklessly throw them away in ostentation, without good taste. Mr. Lorimer bought himself a set of Biblical pictures, beautiful enough to charm the most fastidious eye. The setting of such scenes as the home of David, near Bethlehem, the camp of Saul in the Vale of Elah,

and the palace of Saul at Gibeah, were wonderful in the appeal they made to the artistic sense.

In the rage for dramatization even the Bible is not left between its peaceful book covers. *David* and *Saul*, *Jonathan* and *Goliath*, *Michalmerah* and *Samuel*, were all trotted out in a play that neither stirred, nor vaguely interested. *David* was just a melodramatic hero, who at the psychological moment sallied forth to accept the giant's challenge and came back a few seconds later, before the curtain fell, with a freak giant's head in his hands.

We smiled in sheer jocundity of spirit. It was such a hideous head and *David* must have sliced it off with such overweening rapidity that one could only marvel at the superiority of steel in those Biblical days—when there were no trusts! We were not permitted to see *Goliath* who had piqued our curiosity. In fact, the only episode that we should really have cared to look at, took place "off stage"—and it was most tantalizing.

Like Mrs. Kennedy, Mr. Wright Lorimer's reasons for breaking in upon us were not apparent. They were set forth very freely in his Rosenfeldian stationery, and I had carefully read them—for I never like to take the chance of missing anything. As an actor, Mr. Lorimer was quite harmless. If he be exceptionally endowed, that endowment did not emerge from "The Shepherd King." He has plenty of voice, with nothing impressive in it. He never rose to occasions, but this may—in charity, I say it—be due to the fact that there were no occasions.

In fact he appeared to be an innocuous young actor in a hurry to get to a position, in which hurry cuts little ice. The actors in his company, not stars, seemed almost brilliant in contrast with his own work. They possessed a certain stage knack that he lacked. What there is about the footlights to arouse this get-there-quickly frenzy, it is hard to define. There must be a deadly germ that eats into the very cuticle of amiable young people. As a production, however, "The Shepherd

King" may teach us many things. It is seldom that anything more discreetly opulent has been seen in New York.

These few remarks on the subject of "The Shepherd King" recall to my mind an amusing experience I had in the eastern district of Brooklyn, whither I went to see Mr. Corse Payton's "production" of "Parsifal," as a drama, at reduced, not to say anæmic, rates. My lot in life, not having cast me in the musical vortex—for which I am duly thankful—I was immune from the raging fever of the "Parsifal" controversy. With no Wagnerian sympathies, and with an absolutely heretical predilection for music that has melody in it—please don't imagine that I am blushing as I write this. I should have hated to enter that gladiatorial contest.

I was satisfied with the dramatic fringe with which Mr. Corse Payton tickled me in his Williamsburg playhouse. There I sat, wedged in among a galaxy of affable housewives, chatty Sarah-Janes, and Brooklyn *matinée* fiends, who were confronted relentlessly with "Parsifal" for a "two weeks' run."

It would have done the foolish, self-advertising clergy a power of good to have watched the effect of this dismal, dreary, chaotic and incomprehensible "Parsifal" upon the unprepared tablets of the ingenuous Brooklyn mind. Of the much-vaunted "reverence," there was no suspicion; of the loudly announced impressiveness, there was not a symptom. Mr. Payton's patrons seemed to dimly recognize that the thing was "sacred." But, during the progress of the performance, they tittered and cackled, and ate caramels, and snickered, and bubbled, and tinkled. As for their comments, they were almost too ludicrous to be credited.

Now, this production of "Parsifal," such as it was, gave a very fair idea of the Wagnerian twist. I think I obtained a better notion of the gist of the thing than I had been able to secure at the Metropolitan Opera House. But this Brooklyn "Parsifal," stripped of the faddery, and foppery, and snobbery, and circus advertisement that attended the Conried presentation, incontestably

proved that dramatically, at any rate, the thing was impossible, unintelligible to the average untutored mind, and utterly lacking in what we call "interest."

I unhesitatingly assert that if "Parsifal" had been presented at the Metropolitan Opera House, with Frau Wagner's best wishes, without any legal powwow, without the slightest advertisement, with no advance "booming," as something that New York should see, for the sake of its health, there would have been little of the furore and insensate rumpus that drew shekels to the Metropolitan's box office. The production in Brooklyn, not evil of its kind, merely showed the substance of the thing that had sent New York into profitable convulsions and lucrative hysterics.

Corse Payton pricked the bubble, in his artless Williamsburg way, and those who were interested in the process could watch it. Mr. Mansfield, prior to his appearance in New York, had flamboyantly announced his intention of producing a dramatic "Parsifal." As New York, at the time of the announcement, was in the throes of its "Parsifal" delirium, this was as good an advertisement for Mansfield as any other—better than his old-time trick of retiring from the stage, lecturing and all that sort of thing. Nobody really believed that he had any intention of producing "Parsifal." Now that he has left New York, it has been seriously declared that he had abandoned his plan. Sweet are the uses of advertisement! Wagner has, most assuredly, been serviceable this season.

Miss Edith Wynne Matthison and Mr. Greet's company, have attracted deserved attention at Daly's Theater. Although Mr. Greet, in his sweet and poetic reverence for Shakespeare, insisted upon making one production earlier in the season without scenery—because he thought—bless him!—that New York needed the Elizabethan idea—he gave up the project without a struggle when he found that it didn't pay!

Even the most educational manager

looks askance at—er—education, when the merry chink of the incoming dollar ceases to beat musically upon the tympanum of his ear. He is willing to educate us if we are willing to pay as much for being educated as for being non-educated. Otherwise his altruism takes unto itself wings.

Therefore, we saw "As You Like It" very much set—just as an ordinary, non-educational, money-making manager would set it. No more of the days of good Queen Bess for good Manager Greet. This Shakespearian pastoral had its Forest of Arden prettily and tastefully elaborated, and the program positively made this announcement: "Owing to the time occupied by shifting of scenery, a few short scenes are omitted and some transposed." What say you to that, as a come-down from high horses? Now will you be good?

Miss Matthison's *Rosalind* had considerable charm, and there is not the slightest doubt that this admirable and unusual young actress has made a great impression upon New York. When you recall the fact that she came here, comparatively unheralded, in the "old morality play" called "Everyman," and has, in a very short space of time, simply compelled artistic recognition, you will perceive that Miss Matthison is not at all "everyday."

Her serious moods seem more natural than her lighter ones. It is more difficult for her to rollick than to diffuse a pale, but pleasing pathos. Yet she warmed to *Rosalind*, and in spite of an unsatisfactory *Orlando*, her work gave genuine pleasure and made its appeal. Mr. Greet himself, as *Jaques*, redeemed the effect of his *Malvolio*, in "Twelfth Night."

Following "As You Like It," came a few performances of Dr. Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer," a comedy very rarely presented in New York, and I don't know why, for it is most amusing and clever, and, in its brilliant dialogue, quite "up to date," if not more so. In this, Miss Matthison played *Kate Hardcastle*, not a very good part for her, by the by. However, her rare and radiant personality was again in

conspicuous evidence, and although her temperamental lack of buoyancy could not be forgotten it would be a callous critic, indeed, who could overlook her artistic charm.

Mr. Greet, who may be said to rival Sydney Rosenfeld in the art of protestation, was hoist by his own petard. His strenuous effort has been to coax us into the belief that he was a singularly reverent person. Tamper with the classics! Oh, my dear fellow, perish the thought! But in "She Stoops to Conquer" Mr. Greet played *Tony Lumpkin*, and if he did not tamper—well, Francis Wilson, and De Wolf Hopper, and "Jimmy" Powers, and the fraternity of low comedians, have never tampered!

This reverent gentleman simply annexed *Tony Lumpkin*, and no tailor ever worked harder to make a coat fit than Mr. Greet labored with the *Lumpkin* garment. The liberties he took might have escaped our notice if an ordinary actor had indulged in them. As Greet, however, resolutely declines to be ordinary, and prefers to do commonplace things in an uncommonplace way, we must go on record as uttering a protest at his ruthless editing of Dr. Goldsmith. I wonder what the late Dr. Samuel Johnson would have said of it!

Before leaving the classical subject—tearing myself reluctantly away from it, as it were—I must allude to a performance of "As You Like It" that I saw at the Murray Hill Theater, given by Mr. Henry V. Donnelly's industrious and conscientious stock company. This is a veritable school, that beats all the advertised "schools of acting" into a cocked hat. It has turned out some capital artists. Both Miss Sandol Miliken and Miss Dorothy Donnelly graduated from the Murray Hill stock company.

Hard and unremitting labor, incessant change, little advertisement, the applause of a fixed *clientèle*, the neglect of Broadway, and the scant consideration of critics, are the perquisites of the Murray Hill stock company. Yet there were many commendable features about this lightning-change production of "As You Like It." To be sure, Miss Edna

Phillips and Mr. Theodore Gamble, as *Rosalind* and *Orlando*, were a trifle "off the key," but some of the parts were extremely well played. From a Broadway point of view, Mr. George Farren, Mr. William J. Butler and Mr. Edgar Allan Woolf, deserved a large measure of praise, as did Mr. Priestly Morrison, who played *Touchstone*.

This sort of work should be encouraged. When you can stroll into a placid, East Side playhouse, and see a fairly meritorious Shakespearian performance, free from managerial cant, and the simian machinations of the "press agent," you feel that possibly, after all, there may be balm in Gilead—and Gilead, in this instance, is but a few blocks from Broadway.

Young Mr. "Willie" Collier—and, by the by, I own a program in which he was set forth as "Master" Collier—has "struck ile" once more. After experiences so troublous that they would have driven the average comedian to sheer and undiluted tragedy, Mr. Collier has come into his own again, at the Criterion Theater, in a clever farce by Richard Harding Davis, called "The Dictator." That the play makes the actor, and not the actor the play, is thus further Q. E. D'd.

Even Mr. Collier's *insouciant* personality was snuffed out in the early season, when he appeared in two atrocities, called respectively—yet not respectfully—"Personal" and "Are You My Father?" Foolish people, addicted to the lauding of the actor above the play, must have grave occasion to ponder. Had Mr. Collier been a mere novice, or fame-seeking amateur, his failures could not have been quicker or more concentrated. They were absolutely rapid transit in their effect.

"The Dictator," however, is a capital farce, with brisk and intelligent dialogue, a comparatively new environment and a rushing action. Collier plays the part of a young man, who has left New York in a hurry after a brawl with a recalcitrant cabman. He has embarked upon a vessel bound for South America, the home of baby republics, and after a chain of events, which are exceedingly

entertaining, he finds himself United States consul at Porto Baños, in some other fellow's place.

This gives the young comedian a fine opportunity to exhibit his picturesque coolness, his spectacular "nerve," and various other characteristics, which the admirers of this actor—and I am in their front rank—bunch together affectionately as "Collierisms." There is a señora, in love with the real consul, who makes things lively for him, and there are complications enough to satisfy the soul of the most inveterate farce lover. The defect in the picture lies in the fact that the comedian's character writes itself down as a bit of a blackguard. Barring this, "The Dictator" is one of the best things of the season, and both Mr. Collier and Mr. Charles Frohman—who rescued little Willie from the sea of failure—may be congratulated.

In "The Dictator," Miss Louise Allen, whose scope is limited, though it is a very nice scope, is admirably fitted. She is one of the best burlesque artists that we have, and by burlesque I mean the gentle, abused art of parody. Edward Abeles also shines forth in the farce, as a valet, who has little to say, but whose obsequiousness and timidity are vastly exhilarating. In fact, at the Criterion, we have a good play, a fine star and a capable company. Mr. Collier may indeed opine that everything comes to him who waits.

Charles Hawtrey says that he is—going—away—from—here. Yes; there was a line on the program of the New Lyceum Theater, announcing that this was his "third and last American tour." And such a comparatively young man, too! It does seem awfully sad, and—and—I have just dried my eyes, for the foolish tears will flow. Looking the apparently pathetic situation squarely in the face, however, I am inclined to believe that this "third and last American tour" is what a slangy person—not your humble servant—would call a "jolly."

Mr. Hawtrey will probably go back to London and try new plays. As soon as he finds one as vital and convincing as "A Message from Mars" Mr. Hawtrey will probably trot back to New

York, for a fourth and last American tour. Why he bothers to put in that little word "last," I can't imagine. It doesn't even sound well. It has such a distinctly theatrical flavor. "The last American tour, till next time" would be much kinder and certainly more in accordance with the ethics of stage farewells.

That Mr. Hawtrey was hard up for a play was emphatically proved by the production, at the New Lyceum Theater, of a silly old farce by Sir Francis C. Burnand, adapted from the French, and entitled "Saucy Sally." This invertebrate affair, dealing with the desiccated theme of a husband who makes frequent visits to London, and leads his wife, and mother-in-law—a mother-in-law, in these enlightened days, if you please—to believe that he is on a voyage of exploration, has but one excuse. It gave the New York public a chance to see Hawtrey in the style of part that first established his vogue.

Stupid as it was, we were nevertheless compelled to admire the marvelously clever work of Mr. Hawtrey. There is no better farce actor before the English-speaking public. The ease, the deftness, the brilliancy, and the art with which he attacks a flimsy rôle of this caliber, opened our eyes, as it were. This is the sort of character that John Drew is supposed to illuminate. But Mr. Drew might learn many valuable lessons from Hawtrey.

"Saucy Sally" was saved. Threadbare though it was, it sprouted a nap, for the time being. It was a genuine pleasure to watch acting *as is* acting. In his previous productions, before this tear-inducing "third and last American tour," to wit, "A Message From Mars," and "The Man From Blankley's," Charles Hawtrey had few opportunities to show his real qualities. His successful plays did not depend upon his own acting. In "Saucy Sally" it was the actor who charmed us. We were quite philosophical about it. Years ago, when we were laughing lads, and this ancient style of farce was not so obviously ancient, Mr. Hawtrey in "Saucy Sally" would have been a revelation.

FOR BOOK LOVERS

THERE have always been and probably always will be persons who are prone to look upon books of the character of "The Scarlet Letter" as essentially immoral; who fail to appreciate the wonderfully pathetic beauty of the story of Hester Prynne, because their attitude toward the particular sin which gives the tale its *motif* is one of such hard intolerance as to make impossible any perception of the moral purpose involved in the working out of consequences or any recognition of the fact that, as Emerson says, "The laws of disease are as beautiful as those of health."

This attitude is not necessarily due to hypocrisy, as is sometimes charged, but rather to an incapacity to understand and therefore to sympathize with human weakness, and make allowances for the sinner.

For our own part, we do not believe that it is desirable from any point of view to exclude this theme from fiction; on the contrary, it is a perfectly proper and necessary one. As long as human nature endures, and human emotions and passions and frailties continue to exert the enormous influence in the world that they have in the past, they will be the subject of the intensest interest. The use of this subject, therefore, both in the novel and on the stage is inevitable, and its proper treatment as the legitimate subject of literary effort cannot but have a wholesome effect.

We would not be understood, however, as offering anything like a justification of all novels dealing with this subject, or even any considerable number of them. Indeed, it might be said without exaggeration that the largest proportion of such books ought never to have been written, much less published.

Their whole tendency and effect is

bad, and as they are usually short-lived they add nothing to the general store of literature. They ought, therefore, to be discouraged, both by the public and the publishers; and if people who write can be made to understand that books of this kind are hopelessly defective in perspective, in drawing and in color, that their authors have declared themselves to be deficient in literary sense and cultivation, that they have been guilty of a piece of gross philistinism, the chances are that the number of offenders will diminish.

Three books, lately published, may possibly find a few readers who will be inclined to place them in this class; one of them, indeed, has already been severely condemned by some reviewers. Each of them deals, in one way or another, with the theme we have referred to; and each of them, it may be remarked incidentally—though the fact carries no special significance—was written by a woman. We ourselves think that they should be read, and read together if possible, for by doing so the reader will find a significance in each one that might otherwise escape him. It is perhaps because we have done this that we have failed to discover objectionable features in "I," which has been especially condemned.

The three books are: "He That Eateth Bread With Me," by H. A. Mitchell Keays, published by McClure & Phillips; "I, in which a woman tells the truth about herself," anonymous, D. Appleton & Co., and "The Test," by Mary Tappan Wright, Scribner's Sons.



"He That Eateth Bread With Me" has already been called a "problem novel," presumably because the main incident of

the story is a divorce, the consequences of which constitute the plot. But this gives an entirely false impression, for the book has been written with such art as to make the question of problem wholly subordinate to the action of the tale. The author has merely taken a certain phase of modern life and woven it into the material of an extremely interesting story, leaving the consequences to take care of themselves—showing unusually keen artistic perception. She has manifested more than ordinary self-restraint in the face of an obvious temptation to point a moral, allowing the characters to develop themselves and work themselves through their difficulties in their own way like the men and women of real life.

The story begins practically with the divorce obtained by Clifford Mackemer from Katherine to enable him to marry another woman. The complications of the plot grow out of the existence of their son and of the fact that Mackemer begins, soon after he has committed himself, to find out that he has made a mistake, to which is to be added Katherine's continued loyalty to the man whom she persists in regarding as her husband.

The unhappy story of the Mackemers is considerably brightened by the character of Airlie, a cheerful, clever girl, who is brought in naturally as a guest of Katherine. Her wholesome, normal love affair with Dr. Regester satisfactorily neutralizes the catastrophe of the Mackemers.

The draft made upon the reader's sympathies and emotions is sufficient evidence of the strength of the book. A striking instance of it is in chapter six, in which Isabel, the second wife, feeling that Mackemer's attitude toward her is changing, attempts to practice upon him the allurements which first won him, and one begins to feel repelled, and to wonder, even before Mackemer shows signs of it, how soon he will begin to be conscious of it.



"The Test" is the story of a girl betrayed by her lover, and then deserted

by him for another woman on the eve of her wedding. The subject is trite enough in real life as well as in fiction, but its treatment here is such as to separate it from the multitude of books of this class which have fallen into inevitable and deserved oblivion. The way in which Alice Lindell meets the test to which she is put gives the book its novelty and its strength.

Tom Winchester, her former lover, after his marriage and his repentance, begs her to go away with him, expressing his willingness to desert his wife, and is supported by his father, Senator Winchester, who has defended and befriended Alice with all the power of his high position and influence. She replies to the latter: "Can't you see, senator, that our lives were meant to go straight? Don't you remember the time when I broke the window of the drug store throwing stones? I had started to run away, but you caught me and made me go in and tell old Mr. Jenkins what I had done. You said that whenever I did wrong throughout all the rest of my life I must remember that unless I was willing to walk up and take the consequences of it, I should never be able to go on again straight and true." She leaves it to the senator to decide, and after a long time he says: "My son, if she is not right she is too divinely wrong for human interference!"

How she endures her trouble after the birth of her baby, how she faces her disgrace, bitter as it is, and braves the reproaches of her family and the thinly veiled sneers of the townspeople, and lives it all down by sheer force of character is the burden of the story. It is, withal, a rather somber tale, unrelieved either by humor or the love story of any others in the book, for even the love affair of her sister, a college professor, is shadowed by the somewhat priggish character of the young clergyman, whom she finally marries. But the theme being what it is, artistic requirements necessarily exclude much bright coloring.

While the workmanship is of a high order, one cannot help feeling that Tom Winchester is made to appear in a much

better light than he deserves; for a man who treats a woman as he treated Alice is apt to be fundamentally a cad.

However, the story is absorbing, and merits, as it will doubtless get, serious and attentive reading.



"I" has a sub-title which is calculated to raise anticipations in the minds of some readers that will probably be disappointed. To say that it is a book "in which a woman tells the truth about herself" may mean much or little. In the present instance the disclosures are not particularly sensational or even novel, and yet, for all that, the anonymous author has put together a strong and interesting story.

Sidney begins her history at the beginning, when, as an unattractive, hoydenish girl, she distresses her mother by her uncouth manners and untidy habits. It is in her college days that she makes the discovery that, in spite of a plain face, she possesses a certain charm for men, which, in obedience to a perfectly natural feminine instinct, she does not hesitate to use. It seems to be the author's intention to keep her heroine clear of the charge of censurable flirtation, for the affair with Ross Kimball, the millionaire, has some excuse—not justification—in Sidney's desire to further her husband's interests. In her willingness to do this she presents a striking contrast to Katherine Mackemer, who disdains to use any arts to retain her own husband's loyalty to her, much less attract another man. It is a subject for thought that each of these women brings disaster upon herself by means so radically different.

Sidney's story, with one or two exceptions, is extremely well told. The style is easy and simple, and the incidents of the tale are naturally connected, but one tires a little of the artistic cant and the somewhat unconvincing character of Dr. Kirke; and after the climax in the tower room the reader is conscious of a feeling of haste to reach the end of the story. The scene between Sidney and Kimball is intensely dra-

matic, and the descriptive writing is masterly.



Brand Whitlock has written another political romance, though its character is not suggested by the title, "Her Infinite Variety," Bobbs-Merrill Company.

The hero, Morley Vernon, is a member of the Illinois Senate, and is engaged to Amelia Ansley, a charming young woman with somewhat old-fashioned notions about politics. A bill granting the suffrage to women is pending in the Senate, but it has awakened only a languid interest in the members. However, the visit of Miss Maria Burley Greene, an attorney practicing in Chicago, to the Senate chamber, puts a new face upon matters, and by an unlooked-for charm of person and manner she succeeds in enlisting Vernon into the suffragist ranks. His enthusiasm and eloquence, stimulated by his growing interest in the fair attorney, brings the bill to the point of passage, when one of its rapidly diminishing number of opponents succeeds in having it laid over till the next day. This proves to be its doom, for the next morning there arrives at Springfield a delegation of ladies from Chicago, among them Miss Ansley, whose errand is the killing of the bill.

Under the astute leadership of Mrs. Overman Hodge-Lathrop the bill fails to receive a majority vote, and, thanks to her superior knowledge of parliamentary law, a final quietus is put upon it.

Vernon impresses one as being something of a cad, due to his susceptibility to Miss Greene's charms and his forgetfulness of Amelia. These two young ladies supply the romantic element.

The story is short, and is characteristically illustrated by Howard Chandler Christy.



We are assured by the publishers of "The Fugitive," by Ezra S. Brudno, Doubleday, Page & Co., that the book is fiction, but it reads very much like an

autobiography. Not that that fact detracts from its interest as a story; on the contrary, it lends to the book a vital realism which makes it uniquely absorbing.

It is what is commonly called a "timely" book, for it deals with Jewish life and Jewish persecutions in Russia. It begins with the early recollections of the narrator in Lithuania, where his father was executed on a false charge of the ritual murder of a Christian child, following him in his acquisition of an orthodox Jewish education, into Southern Russia, and finally to America, closing with his introduction into the seething Hebrew community on New York's East Side.

The story is vividly and powerfully told, with what is evidently an intimate knowledge of the curious, to a Gentile, customs of the Jews both in Russia and here, but its somberness is relieved by the love story, of the hero and the Christian daughter of the judge who instigated the prosecution of his father and condemned him to death.

The action is rapid, almost too much so in fact, for in places the transitions seem rather too abrupt.

Aside from its interest as a story—and it has its full share—Henry C. Rowland's new novel, "To Windward," published by A. S. Barnes & Co., possesses an added interest, as well as some surprises, from a purely critical standpoint.

Dr. Rowland's work hitherto has consisted of short stories of the sea, which were collected and published in one volume under the title of "Sea Scamps." One would naturally look, therefore, for a repetition of his good work in the same line, particularly so when one considers the suggestiveness of the title of his new book. But curiously enough that part of it which has to do with the salt water is the poorest part of the story. Fortunately this comes first, and if the reader has sufficient patience to get through the preliminary chapters without a feeling of disappointment at the rather cheap and artificial devices

resorted to by the author to get Amos Knapp on his feet, he will come upon a thoroughly good tale which will keep him absorbed till the end.

After the clatrap of the beginning it settles down into an account of the struggles of Amos to establish himself as a surgeon in New York, complicated by a love story and the iniquities of a college friend, who turns out to be a very contemptible blackguard.

Dr. Rowland has made skillful use of incidents in the private and hospital practice of a great surgeon—for the first time we believe in fiction—and some of the hospital scenes are realistic enough to fill one's nostrils with the odor of antiseptics. The narrative never drags after the author really gets into the swing of the story, and one is carried along with no consciousness of anything but interest in the plot.

A book which is not fiction, but which has some of the special qualities of a good story, besides imparting a good deal of interesting information, is "My Air Ships," by Santos-Dumont, Century Company. It is the narration, told with unconscious art, and in a simple, easy style, of the development, from the old-fashioned spherical balloon, of the author's latest attempts at aerial navigation. It is necessarily a story of action, of dramatic action, because it is a recital of actual events brought about by the daring of perils apprehended, but previously unknown. His account of his repeated failures to win the Deutsch prize, and his final success, is as stirring as anything in fiction.

The book is profusely illustrated with extremely good half tones.

"A Gingham Rose," by Alice Woods Ullman, Bobbs-Merrill Company, is a good book for summer reading, though it is more ambitious and mature than "Edges," the author's first story. The plot, which is quite simple, is concerned with the love affairs of Anne Preston, a young woman struggling to make her

living by her pen in New York; John Warren, an artist, and Victor Stetson, who has tried newspaper work in Chicago, but has given it up because of the combination of a fortune inherited from his father and consumption, to which he finally succumbs. Anne marries Stetson because he is sent away to Arizona by his doctor and needs a nurse, John being at the time engaged to Catherine Gage. Stetson finally dies, and John's engagement is broken, leaving him free to marry Anne, with whom he is really in love.

Victor and Anne are the attractive characters; they are really very lovable people. John Warren is the kind of man we all know, and have little patience with: uncertain, vacillating and lacking in principle. It does not seem at all clear why he had any difficulty in coming to a conclusion to marry Anne.

It would be a little singular that an episode so full of drama and pathos as the children's crusades in the thirteenth century has been so long overlooked by novelists, were it not for the fact that it has been so unaccountably neglected by historians. "The Sign of Triumph," by Sheppard Stevens, L. C. Page & Co., marks the first reference in fiction to this extraordinary demonstration.

The strange infatuation and the pathetic sufferings of the little ones afford material for a romantic tale without much embellishment by the imagination; the mere recital of the facts possesses a dramatic and emotional interest equal to almost anything in historical records.

There is added, however, as accessory to the main topic of the book, the story of the adventures, with the children, of a needy English gentleman, whose father was ruined, as so many others were, by his devotion to Richard Cœur de Lion in an earlier crusade, but who is reinstated in fortune and reputation by his successful love for the widowed mother of one of the infant crusaders.

Mrs. Stevens has shown, in her latest effort, great improvement over her

previous books, and has made what we should call, unqualifiedly, a thoroughly good story.

Anthony Trollope is said to have declared that at the time he wrote "Barchester Towers," he had no acquaintance among the clergy he describes so faithfully. Margery Williams gives evidence of a similar literary intuition in "The Price of Youth," published by Macmillan. She is an English girl, born and bred, yet no one would imagine that she was not a native of the little New Jersey town in which her plot originates and develops. She is only betrayed here and there by the use of English spelling, such as "waggon," words, like "shunting," and phrases, like "by way of." There is no mistaking the meaning of the phrase "local color," as applied to this tale. It is full of it; characters, customs and localities are done to the life. The description of the drive of Fan and King to Wright's mill, and their return at night through the half-mysterious beauty of the pine woods take such a hold on the imagination and attention that when the reader finishes it he feels that he himself has just come out of the thicket onto the highway. It is a thoroughly good book, though we cannot help feeling that the ending is not quite logical.

"Joan of the Alley," by Frederick Orin Bartlett, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., is a story of slum life. Joan Sullivan, the heroine, has an Irish father, but her mother is French, a fact which is used to tone down to some extent the tedium of the dialect. The story takes her and her lover through the now familiar experiences of tenement and factory life, strikes, balls, toughs and ward politics, to a happy conclusion, when her husband sums it all up as follows: "Johnny," he said, "if a man does his durndest, lives on der level, an' cuts out der booze, dis ain't such a hell of a bad world."

"No, Denny," she answered, kissing him.